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Her Step-Husband

by

Larry E. Johnson

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BY LARRY E. JOHNSON

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HER STEP-HUSBAND

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY

LARRY E. JOHNSON

CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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Her Step-Husband

HER STEP-HUSBAND

FOR FOUR MEN AND FIVE WOMEN

CHARACTERS

HARVEY P. MARSHALL . . . *Mary's permanent husband*
DR. GERALD NILES (JERRY) . . . . . .
. . . . . *Mary's husband pro tem.*
LIMPY LANNIGAN . . . . . *An ex-convict*
OFFICER SHEA . . . . . *An affable cop*
MARY MARSHALL . . . . . *An incurable romanticist*
SYLVIA ALLEN . . . . . *Mary's friend*
MISS EMILY PAISLEY (AUNT EMMY) . . . . . *Her aunt*
FLORENCE AINSLEE . . . . . *Her cousin*
STELLA . . . . . *Her maid*

TIME—*The present.*

PLACE—*Harvey P. Marshall's bungalow at Crestdale, a suburb of New York.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About two and a half hours.*

SYNOPSIS OF ACTS

ACT I. The dining room of Harvey Marshall's bungalow, at about seven o'clock in the evening.

ACT II. Scene 1. Same as Act I. Two hours later. Scene 2. Same as Act I. Two hours later than Scene 1.

ACT III. Same as Act I. Ten minutes later than Scene 2 of previous act.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

HARVEY—A young man between twenty-five and thirty years of age. He wears a business suit at his first entrance. During Act I he changes to evening clothes.

JERRY—Is a little younger than Harvey. Wears a light, summer suit.

LANNIGAN—May be of any age. He is a rather tough-looking customer. He walks with a limp and wears a rough serge suit with baggy trousers.

SHEA—May be of any age. Wears a neat policeman's uniform.

MARY—About twenty-five years old. She wears a bungalow apron over an evening gown.

SYLVIA—About the same age as Mary. She also wears a bungalow apron over an evening gown. Uses a wrap of some sort for last half of Act II.

AUNT EMMY—Wears traveling dress, coat, and hat for first entrance. She changes to evening dress during first act. In last half of Act II, she wears a bright-colored kimono. Returns to first-act costume for Act III.

FLORENCE—About twenty years of age. Wears a smart traveling costume in Act I, kimono in Act II, and first-act costume for Act III.

STELLA—About eighteen years of age. Wears black dress with maid's cap and apron.

PROPERTIES

Small dining-room table
Two armchairs
Five small chairs

Buffet
Phonograph
Floor lamp with red silk shade
Two electric light switches
Two curtain poles
Telephone
Clock
Box of roses
Doorbell and telephone bell
Telegram blank in opened envelop
Four dishes of jello
One phonograph record, jazz
Cigar box, half full
Crumb brush and crumb pan
Thunder sheet, or bass drum for making thunder effects

For HARVEY—Newspaper, cigar, large service tray, soup plates, cups and saucers, two bills of stage money to give Shea.

For JERRY—Traveling bag, roll of stage money, pair of scissors.

For LANNIGAN—Pink slip of printed paper.

For SHEA—Traveling bag containing table silver, in Act III.

For MARY—Pencil and paper; blanket, pillows, sheets.

For SYLVIA—Large clothes basket containing curtains, bed linen, and traveling bag full of table silver.

For AUNT EMMY—Official documents for deeds.

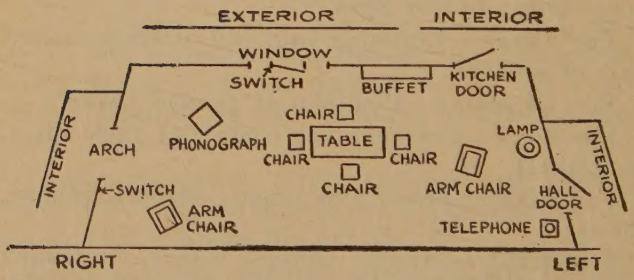
For FLORENCE—Engagement ring.

For STELLA—Service tray with cup of coffee, sugar bowl, spoon and napkin; coffee urn on tray; child's silver mug; two traveling bags; tureen.

NOTES ON LIGHTING

The stage may be lighted by a chandelier or by bracket lamps. These must be on a different switch from the floor lamp. There is a veranda light, working from a switch on the back wall. A moonlight effect back of the window is used in the second scene of Act II. A sunset effect may be used in Act I. All lights are up throughout the performance, except in the second scene of Act II. In this scene, the floor lamp alone is lighted. The shade of this lamp should be so arranged that a circle of light is thrown to the left, leaving the rest of the stage in comparative darkness.

SCENE PLOT



STAGE DIRECTIONS

Up stage means away from the footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left*, the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

HER STEP-HUSBAND

First Act

Scene: *The dining room in* Harvey P. Marshall's *bungalow at Crestdale, a suburb of New York. Anyone entering from the street must come through a door in the left wall, pretty well down stage. There is an arch in the middle of the opposite wall, which opens on a hall leading to the sleeping apartments of the bungalow. In the back wall near the left corner is a door which opens into the kitchen. There is a window in the middle of the back wall; this window is in three panels. The middle panel is of stained glass and opens like a door to allow egress to the veranda. The two side panels are of clear glass. The doors are all backed interior. The window is backed with a tab showing a lawn.*

A buffet stands between the kitchen door and the window. A dining-room table, large enough to accommodate four persons, is placed a little above center. There are two armchairs in the room, one down right and the other up left. Four ordinary chairs are set about the table, and a chair is placed in front of a small table with a telephone, which stands against the left wall below door. A floor lamp with a red silk shade stands between the easy chair and the left wall.

A phonograph is at right of table. It is evidently not in its regular place. There are curtain poles over the arch and over the window, but there

are no curtains. A clock stands on the buffet, its hands pointing to a quarter to seven. A florist's box, containing roses, is lying in the armchair at left. An electric switch should be placed on right wall below arch, and another on back wall near window.

Early in the play, the room has a rather disorderly appearance; later it is transformed into a pretty interior. This set stands throughout the performance.

At rise of curtain, STELLA *is discovered spreading tablecloth on table. She is wearing a black dress with a white cap and apron. A knock is heard on window in rear.* STELLA *pays no attention to it. The tapping is repeated.* STELLA *goes up center and swings open window.*

SYLVIA *appears in window. She is wearing a bungalow apron over an evening gown.*

SYLVIA.

How do you do? Are you Mrs. Marshall's new maid?

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am.

SYLVIA.

Where is Mrs. Marshall?

STELLA.

She is dressing. Shall I tell her you want to see her?

SYLVIA.

No, don't disturb her. I am Mrs. Allen from next door.

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am. Miz' Marshall told me she was expectin' you.

SYLVIA.

I have some things here. Please help me get them in. (SYLVIA *hands a large clothes basket through window. The basket is filled with drapes and curtains.* STELLA *takes the basket, carries it down right, and sets it below archway. She then returns to window.* SYLVIA *hands her a traveling bag.*) Be careful of this, please. It's silver plate. (STELLA *takes traveling bag and sets it on table.* SYLVIA *steps in through window.*) We might as well get right to work. We have a lot to do and not much time to do it. If you will give me those curtains, I will drape them. No; help me with this phonograph first. We will stand it near the window, then we won't have far to carry it when we take it back to-morrow.

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am.

(*They place phonograph against wall at right of window.*)

SYLVIA.

Is Mr. Marshall home yet? (*She gets chair from end of table and sets it at window.*)

STELLA.

I ain't seen him. (*She takes curtains from basket and hands them to* SYLVIA, *who is now standing on the chair.* SYLVIA *hangs curtains on curtain poles over the window.*)

Enter MARY *hastily by arch at right. She also has a bungalow apron over an evening gown.*

MARY.

This is awfully good of you, Sylvia. (*To* STELLA.) What is your name, please? I've forgotten it.

STELLA.

Stella, ma'am.

MARY.

Oh, yes, Stella. Is the baby asleep?

STELLA.

I think so. He's stopped hollerin'.

MARY.

Oh, but you can't go by that. He may be asleep, and he may be eating his blanket. You had better run in and see.

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am. (*Exit by arch, right.* MARY *takes drape from basket and spreads it on sideboard.*)

SYLVIA.

She appears to be a smart girl. Where did you find her?

MARY.

At an employment agency. She is a smart girl. She's done wonders this afternoon, and baby adores her. He screams for her, and when he sees her he just loves her to death—pulls her hair and kicks her and everything.

SYLVIA.

You ought to keep her. You really need a maid.

MARY.

I know, but we just can't afford it. It takes every penny that Harvey can scrape together to make the payments on the house. I wonder why he doesn't come. He's usually home long before this.

SYLVIA.

I forgot to tell you. Tom can't come.

MARY.

Oh, I'm so sorry.

SYLVIA.

He is, too. I phoned him at the office just as soon as you told me, but he said that he had to go to Chester. They are putting up a new hotel there —three hundred bathrooms—and Tom is going down to see if he can land the contract.

MARY.

Harvey always enjoys himself when Tom is here. (*Opens traveling bag and looks into it.*) Oh, what beautiful silver!

SYLVIA.

(*Getting down from chair.*)

My wedding presents.

MARY.

I didn't get any. That's one disadvantage about eloping; one doesn't get any wedding presents. (*She takes the silver pieces from bag and arranges them on sideboard.*)

SYLVIA.

(*Helping her.*)

Did you and Mr. Marshall elope?

MARY.

Yes.

SYLVIA.

That must have been romantic.

MARY.

It sounds romantic, but it wasn't really. Harvey just waited at the school for me, and we walked down to the office of the justice of the peace and got married. After the old fellow married us, he tried to sell Harvey a life insurance policy.

SYLVIA.

But why didn't you get married in the regular way?

MARY.

On account of Aunt Emily.

SYLVIA.

Aunt Emily? Is that the aunt who is coming here to-night?

MARY.

Yes. Aunt Emily, Grandpa Paisley, and I all lived together in a little hick town out in California called Boggs' Corners. When grandpa died, Aunt Emily sent me to an eastern school to finish my education. It was there that I met Harvey. We fell in love with each other, and Harvey wrote aunty asking her if he might marry me. She sent him a telegram collect. It contained two words: "Certainly not."

SYLVIA.

So of course you were married immediately.

MARY.

Yes. And aunty has really never forgiven either of us. You see she wanted me to marry a local boy, Seth Goodrich, who was reasonably well-to-do, had quite a lot of real estate, and owned a shingle mill. Seth was crazy about me.

SYLVIA.

Then your aunt has never seen Mr. Marshall?

MARY.

Never. Harvey wrote her a nice letter, apologizing for having married me and asking her if we might come out to California the following summer and pay her a visit. Aunty replied in a most insulting manner. Harvey was offended, and the correspondence ended right there. Aunty adopted a sort of a second cousin of mine, Florence Ainslee. You'll see her to-night.

SYLVIA.

How is it that your aunt and you are on friendly terms now?

MARY.

Well, shortly after baby came, aunty sent him a silver mug. I wrote her a letter thanking her for the gift. She answered it, and since then we have kept up a sketchy correspondence. That reminds me: Where is that mug? (*She stands a moment in deep thought, then crosses to arch at right and calls softly.*) Stella, Stella!

STELLA *appears in arch.*

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am.

MARY.

Is Willie asleep?

STELLA.

I don't know if he is or not, Miz' Marshall; but he ain't eatin' an' he ain't hollerin'; an' he's got his eyes shut.

MARY.

He's asleep, I guess. Now, Stella, on the top shelf of the kitchen cabinet you'll find a little silver mug. It's full of starch—or maybe it's bluing. I want you to take it down, polish it up, and set it on the sideboard—right in the center where it's bound to be seen.

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am. (*Crosses to left, about to exit by upper door.*)

MARY.

And, Stella. (STELLA *turns.*) There will be five instead of six for dinner.

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am. (*Exit into the kitchen.*)

MARY.

(*Looks about room.*)

It's beginning to look very pretty, Sylvia.

SYLVIA.

Wait till I hang the curtains over the arch. (*Takes chair from in front of window and places it near arch. Gets curtains from basket, climbs up on chair and begins to hang them.*)

MARY.

I imagine that you think I am awfully cheap,

Sylvia, borrowing your things and four-flushing like this.

SYLVIA.

I don't think anything of the kind. As Tom says, "A good front is half the battle."

MARY.

This really is a special case. You know Harvey and I were quite poor when we first married. Of course we are still poor, but what I mean is, we were dreadfully poor then. The kind of poorness where you buy a chunk of beef on Saturday, have roast beef for Sunday, beef stew for Monday, beef hash for Tuesday, beef croquettes for Wednesday, beef broth for Thursday—and Friday you don't eat meat, anyway.

SYLVIA.

I know. I've been through it.

MARY.

(*Taking long-stemmed roses from a florist's box on chair at left and arranging them on tablecloth.*)

Harvey was clerking in a commission house then, and we were saving the nickels to buy a business of our own.

SYLVIA.

I think it's a shame that your aunt didn't help you when she knew that you were so hard up.

MARY.

Oh, but she didn't know. That's just the point. Aunty thought that we were rich—still thinks so, for that matter.

SYLVIA.

(*Having arranged curtains on curtain pole, descends from chair. Places chair at end of table.*)

Why should she think that?

MARY.

Remember the man I said aunty wanted me to marry—the shingle-mill man?

SYLVIA.

(*Taking napkins from the basket and placing them around table.*)

Yes.

MARY.

Well, shortly after I married, he married, too. He married a girl who used to go to high school with me, back in the old Boggs' Corners days. She was awfully snippy. She used to write to me, telling me what a beautiful home she had and how well Seth was doing. Then I would answer her and say—Well, you know, Sylvia, I just couldn't let her think that her husband was doing any better than my Harvey was.

SYLVIA.

Of course not. Where is your china?

MARY.

In the sideboard. Use the blue set. There isn't enough of the white to go around. (SYLVIA *gets plates and places them about table.*) Well, I used to write long letters to Lilly, (her name is Lilly Goodrich) describing the beautiful bungalow that we lived in. I can write a pretty good letter when I extend myself. You know, Sylvia, I think I should

have made a great novelist, if I just knew more about commas and semicolons and things.

SYLVIA.

They are very confusing.

MARY.

Imagine me, sitting down in my little old dark room, after finishing a hard day's washing, and writing Lilly about the wonderful house I was living in and the terrible trouble I was having to secure first-class servants. Isn't that funny, Sylvia?

SYLVIA.

(*Quietly.*)

No, I don't think it is so funny. I think it is rather pathetic.

MARY.

Well, my letters never fazed Lilly. Her house was always larger and prettier than mine, and she always had more servants. When I wrote her about the beautiful grand piano that Harvey had bought me for a birthday present, Lilly would come back with a seven-thousand-dollar limousine that Seth had bought for her.

SYLVIA.

She would always go you one better.

MARY.

Yes. Even when I wrote and told her about Willie, she wrote back and said she had twins.

SYLVIA.

(*Laughs.*)

Lilly was hard to beat.

MARY.

Yes. But I did beat her; I got the better of the argument. I wrote and informed her that Harvey had just engaged a butler. Not even Lilly Goodrich had the nerve to spring a butler on Boggs' Corners. Well, of course, I never intended to deceive anyone but Lilly. I never thought she would tell anyone else about what I had been writing her.

SYLVIA.

But of course she did.

MARY.

My dear, she ran to aunty with my letters the moment that she got them. That's why aunty thinks that we are rich, that we have a grand piano and a car and maids and butlers and everything. And now she is coming to see us; and she'll be here before the butler, if he doesn't hurry.

SYLVIA.

Mary! You don't mean that you have engaged a butler!

MARY.

The agency said that they would have a man here by six o'clock. (*Looks at clock.*) What in the world can be keeping Harvey? Excuse me, Sylvia. I must see how the dinner is coming on. (*Exit by upper left door.*)

(SYLVIA *walks around table, moving the china about. She has placed plates for five. When she has reached right end of table*—)

Enter HARVEY *by lower door, left. He wears a business suit and carries a newspaper in his hand.*

He has a preoccupied air; does not see SYLVIA *until she speaks.*

SYLVIA.

Good evening, Mr. Marshall.

HARVEY.

(*Surprised.*)

Oh, good evening, Mrs. Allen. (*He looks around the room in astonishment.*) Why—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Allen, I must have turned in at the wrong gate. Very stupid of me! (*Turns, as if about to exit at left.*)

SYLVIA.

Wait! You haven't made any mistake.

HARVEY.

(*Again turning to her.*)

Eh?

SYLVIA.

This is your house.

HARVEY.

(*Slowly comes to center, looking about room.*)

Well, it may be my house, but I don't see anything else that belongs to me.

Enter MARY *by upper left door.*

HARVEY.

Oh, yes. Here's my wife.

MARY.

(*Pouncing on him.*)

Harvey, where have you been? I've been trying to get you on the phone all afternoon.

HARVEY.

I had to go—

MARY.

Never mind. I haven't got time to listen. What kept you so late?

HARVEY.

(*Looking at clock.*)

A quarter of seven. I'm not late, dear.

MARY.

Well, you've got to hurry. Stella has laid out your evening clothes on the bed.

HARVEY.

Who is Stella?

MARY.

The maid.

HARVEY.

What maid?

MARY.

Harvey, there are dozens of things that have to be explained, and I have just a few minutes in which to explain them. Please, dear, try not to have one of your stupid spells.

HARVEY.

(*Mildly.*)

Well, Mary, I will try to be as apt and comprehending as I can. But you must admit—

MARY.

(*Rushes over to telephone table and picks up a telegram.*)

Listen to this: (*Reads.*) "En route, Buffalo,

June 10th. Will arrive in New York this evening. Florence is with me. Will stop with you over night. Sailing on *Majestic* to-morrow morning. Emily Paisley."

HARVEY.

Your Aunt Emily!

MARY.

Yes.

HARVEY.

Who is Florence?

MARY.

She is a sort of a cousin. You know: the one who has been living with aunty. Please hurry.

HARVEY.

What is it that you want me to do?

MARY.

I want you to go to the station to meet them.

HARVEY.

But, my dear, I can't do that.

MARY.

Why not?

HARVEY.

She hasn't mentioned the name of the station or the time that she is to arrive. She hasn't told you the name of the railway.

MARY.

(*Hastily glancing at telegram.*)

That's so. What are we going to do?

HARVEY.

There is nothing that we can do. Your aunt knows our address. She will probably take a taxi and drive out.

MARY.

Yes. (*Musing.*) Perhaps it is best, after all. If we don't have to meet her, I won't have to frame an alibi for the limousine.

HARVEY.

What limousine?

MARY.

Never mind. Go and get dressed.

HARVEY.

Mary, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I just can't stay here and meet your aunt socially.

MARY.

Harvey! Do you mean that I am to shut the door in aunty's face?

HARVEY.

Of course not. Your aunt is your nearest relative. She is welcome to stay here as long as she chooses, but I will stay somewhere else as long as she is beneath this roof.

MARY.

Oh, Harvey!

HARVEY.

(*Raising a hand in expostulation.*)

Now, my dear, I feel that this is best. Your aunt and I would be certain to get into an argument, and I might say something that I afterward would re-

gret. Mrs. Allen, I don't know whether you understand the situation or not. Mary's aunt was opposed to my marrying Mary.

SYLVIA.

Yes, I know. Mary told me.

HARVEY.

I tried to make the best of it. I wrote her, after the wedding, apologizing for having married her niece. I asked her if I might make her a short visit, in order to become better acquainted and thus establish more friendly relations. She replied most insultingly—most insultingly. She said that if I came within a mile of her place, she would sic the dog on me.

MARY.

I know, dear, but later she sent baby a silver mug.

HARVEY.

(*With dignity.*)

I do not consider a silver mug an adequate apology. Understand me, Mrs. Allen, it was not the fact that she declined to allow me to visit her which annoyed me. Her house is her own; she may entertain whom she pleases. But she went out of her way to insult me. I had written her that I was employed in a commission house, that my job was counting and checking the crates of eggs. When she wrote me, she addressed the letter for the whole world to see: "Harvey P. Marshall, Private Secretary to the Hen!"

SYLVIA.

(*Bursts into a hearty laugh and then tries to check it.*)

I beg your pardon, Mr. Marshall.

HARVEY.

It's quite all right, Mrs. Allen. I see that the thing has its humorous side, of course.

MARY.

But Harvey, if you don't stay here, where shall you stay?

HARVEY.

I shall go into town, probably attend a theater this evening, and stay at a hotel to-night.

MARY.

But what am I to tell aunty? If I tell her the truth, it will hurt her feelings, and you wouldn't want me to lie to her, would you?

HARVEY.

No, my dear, I wouldn't want you to lie to anyone. You can say that I am not here, which will be self-evident, and you can say that I have taken a train, which will be the truth. I shall go in on the subway.

MARY.

(*Thoughtfully.*)

Perhaps that is the better way. I seem to remember writing Lilly that you were six feet tall and had curly golden hair.

HARVEY.

What on earth—?

MARY.

Never mind. Where shall you get your dinner?

HARVEY.

At the cafeteria on the corner.

MARY.

Very well. Hurry, now! (HARVEY *crosses to arch at right.*) Wait! I've moved the bed from our room to the guest room, and I've taken baby's crib from the guest room and put it in the little room at the end of the hall. And my dresser is in the room that I am going to give to Florence, and your toilet set is in aunty's room.

HARVEY.

Is the bath still in the same place?

MARY.

Yes. But you haven't time to take a bath. You have to hurry. (*Doorbell rings, off left.*) Heavens! There's aunty now.

HARVEY.

(*Looking at clock.*)

Impossible. It's only a quarter of seven. She could not arrive in New York this evening and be out here by this time.

MARY.

Maybe it is— Do hurry, Harvey, and don't you dare use those guest towels with the blue initials. There are some common towels in the linen closet.

HARVEY.

All right. (*Exit by right door.*)

MARY.

(*To* SYLVIA.)

I'll bet it's the butler. (*Crosses down left as if about to exit.*)

SYLVIA.

Don't you go to the door, Mary. Send Stella.

MARY.

Of course. (*Goes to upper left door.*) Stella!

Enter STELLA *by kitchen door.*

MARY.

There is some one at the door.

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am. And say, Miz' Marshall, the whip' cream won't whip. (*Goes down left and exit.*)

MARY.

(*Gives* SYLVIA *an appealing look.*)

Oh, Sylvia, I wonder if—

SYLVIA.

(*Rising.*)

Of course. I'll attend to it, my dear. Don't worry. (*Exit by kitchen door.*)

(MARY *stands near door at lower left, in a listening attitude.*)

Enter STELLA *by hall door.*

MARY.

Well?

STELLA.

It's a man; says he's a butler. But he don't look like no butler to me. Looks like a yegg.

MARY.

What's a yegg? Never mind. Show him in here.

(*Exit* STELLA. MARY *sits at left. She assumes a detached air of frowning importance—the expres-*

sion of an employer about to engage the services of an employee.)

STELLA *re-enters, followed by* LANNIGAN.

LANNIGAN.

Evenin', lady.

MARY.

Good evening. You come from the employment agency?

LANNIGAN.

Yes, lady. There's me ticket. (*Hands* MARY *a pink slip of paper. The squall of a baby is heard, off right. It is robust and continuous, but is muffled as if it came from some remote part of the house.*)

MARY.

It's baby! Hurry, Stella!

(STELLA *hurries off at right.*)

LANNIGAN.

A baby in the house?

MARY.

Yes.

LANNIGAN.

I loves babies. The last place I works, they didn't have no babies; and believe me, lady, it was just the same as workin' in a morgue. Yes, indeed. I loves the little rays of sunshine. That's what I calls them—little rays of sunshine. How many rays have you, lady?

MARY.

One ra— I mean child.

LANNIGAN.

Just right! One baby to a bungalow is what I claims. For a two-story house, three or even four. But for a bungalow one is the right number. One place I works they has six, and I has the handlin' of them all. The lady of the house she used to often say, "James," (my name is James Lannigan) "James, you couldn't understand children better if you was a mother yourself. How do you do it?" And I says, "It's a gif', lady. It's a gif'."

MARY.

Won't you sit down?

LANNIGAN.

Thanks, lady. (*He sits, right.*)

MARY.

Have you done much butl— I mean, have you had much experience as a butler?

LANNIGAN.

Never done nothin' else, lady. Been a butler since I'm so high. (*Holds hand about two feet from floor.*)

MARY.

Then, of course, you have references.

LANNIGAN.

Ma'am?

MARY.

You have references—recommendations.

LANNIGAN.

I had 'em. Lady, I had scads of references, but

my house catches fire on me, and they was all burned up.

MARY.

Can you give me the address of one of your former employers?

LANNIGAN.

Ma'am?

MARY.

The address of any of the people you have worked for, in case I wished to phone them about you.

LANNIGAN.

I can't do it, lady. They's all dead.

MARY.

Dead!

LANNIGAN.

Yeh. I gets the toughest breaks in the world. No sooner I gets a job, and maybe I'm workin' a couple o' weeks, than the person I'm workin' for ups and dies on me. It's happened time and again.

MARY.

(*Faintly.*)

I—I—don't think that you are exactly the type of a man that I am looking for.

LANNIGAN.

(*Earnestly.*)

Aw, don't say that, lady! Gimme a chance. I needs the work.

MARY.

The—engagement—would be for only two days, anyway.

LANNIGAN.

Two days! Well, that's all right at that. I'm strong for short engagements. Lots of work for a short time is what I wants.

MARY.

What do you charge—? I mean: How much salary—wages do you expect?

LANNIGAN.

I leaves all that to you, lady. All I asks is plenty of work in a high-class family.

MARY.

(*Rising.*)

Well, I don't know— Just wait a moment, please. (*Exit into kitchen.*)

(*After a short pause,* LANNIGAN *rises quickly and limps up to window. He tries the lock, opens window, and looks out. Closes window and goes to buffet; picks up various pieces of silver and examines them, balancing them in his hand in order to determine their weight. He opens drawer in buffet and rummages in it. During all this business, he keeps watching the door where* MARY *made her exit.*)

STELLA *enters at right and stands looking at him.* LANNIGAN *does not see her.*

STELLA.

Hey, you! (LANNIGAN *turns sharply.*) What you doin' there? Go on back and sit down.

LANNIGAN.

I was just givin' things the once over. I'm goin' to be the butler.

STELLA.

Yeh? Well, don't be so pree-mature. You ain't butler yet, and I don't guess you will be when Miz' Marshall finds out you been snoopin'.

LANNIGAN.

Listen, sister; you ain't goin' to tell her, are you? I needs work.

STELLA.

Well, you sure come to the right place to find it. Work is the main thing they're featurin' around here. Gawd knows I need help. Same time, I ain't lettin' no crook slip nothin' over on Miz' Marshall.

MARY *and* SYLVIA *enter by kitchen door.* LANNIGAN *goes down stage.*

MARY.

What is it, Stella?

STELLA.

I ketches this gent riflin' the drawers in the boofay.

LANNIGAN.

She's lyin', lady! She's sore because she don't want no one to work here exceptin' her.

STELLA.

That's a laugh.

SYLVIA.

You had better send this man away, Mary.

LANNIGAN.

Aw, say, ladies, have a heart! You ain't goin' to turn down a honest man, who's lame on account he got shot in the leg, defendin' his country?

MARY.

You were wounded during the war?

LANNIGAN.

Yes, lady.

STELLA.

He's lyin', Miz' Marshall. He ain't been in no war. He's a lag, an old timer. He's done time, and he's done it down south where they hang a ball and chain onto them. That's what makes him limp.

LANNIGAN.

Hey, you! You better keep that trap of yours closed!

MARY.

I—I think that you had better go. I've changed my mind about engaging a butler.

LANNIGAN.

But, lady, I—

SYLVIA.

(*Firmly.*)

Leave the house at once.

LANNIGAN.

Say, who's runnin' this joint, anyway?

MARY.

Go away, or I'll call my husband.

STELLA.

There's a police station in the next block. You don't have to bother your husband to get rid of this lad. Let somebody else's husband do it. (*Crosses to phone.*) Do you go, or do I got to 'foam for a cop?

LANNIGAN.

I'll go, sister. I wouldn't work in this dump, anyway. I ain't used to nothin' but the best, and the minute I gets me eye on this joint, I see it ain't the real McCoy. (*Exit by hall door, left.*)

(STELLA *follows him to door and looks off to assure herself that* LANNIGAN *is leaving the house.* MARY *goes down right.*)

MARY.

I never was so frightened in my life. (*Sits.*) Why did he call you sister, Stella?

STELLA.

(*Going up to kitchen door.*)

That's just a way them 'boes has, Miz' Marshall. He calls me sister just like he calls you lady. It don't mean nothin'. I ain't his sister any more than you're a lady. (*Exit into kitchen.*)

(MARY *looks at* SYLVIA, *as if puzzled at what* STELLA *has said.*)

SYLVIA.

(*Laughs.*)

She didn't mean it, Mary. I wish Tom were here. Stella would hand him a lot of laughs. (*Sits, left.*)

MARY.

Do you suppose that man really is a criminal?

SYLVIA.

Of course he is. I am surprised that you didn't know that the moment that you looked at him.

MARY.

I didn't like his face, but I just had to have some one. And he is so fond of children.

SYLVIA.

How do you know that he is fond of children?

MARY.

He told me so himself. (*Rises and walks about nervously.*) Sylvia, this is going to spoil everything. I was depending on that man. The agency said that everything would be all right, and now— (*Makes a despairing gesture.*)

SYLVIA.

Everything *will* be all right. All you have to do is to say that the butler is not here just at present. Say he is sick and had to be taken to the hospital— operation for appendicitis.

MARY.

Sylvia, I will have to tell aunty that the car is at the garage having its valves ground, and that the piano is at the factory having its action fixed. I just can't say that the butler is away getting repaired.

SYLVIA.

Well, Mary, I don't know what to do about it. If Tom were here he'd arrange it somehow, even if he had to act the butler himself. But I'm no good at thinking up things like that.

MARY.

(*Is walking toward right. She stops suddenly.*) Harvey!

SYLVIA.

(*Puzzled.*)

What?

MARY.
(*Going over to her.*)
If Tom could do it, why not Harvey?

SYLVIA.
You mean, pretend to be the butler?

MARY.
Yes.

SYLVIA.
Do you think that Mr. Marshall would?

MARY.
Yes. He'll do anything that I ask him to. He will put up an awful argument, but he'll do it.

SYLVIA.
I mentioned Tom because he's rather good at that sort of thing.

MARY.
I know, and Harvey isn't. Harvey isn't good at any sort of thing, except being a husband. But he won't have to be good. All he will have to do is to be here and let aunty get a look at him.

SYLVIA.
It might work.

MARY.
It's got to work.

HARVEY *appears at door, right. He is wearing evening clothes.*

HARVEY.
Mary, I can't find anything. Do you know where that over-night bag is?

MARY.

(*Turning and crossing to* HARVEY.)

You won't need it, dear. You won't have to go away, after all.

HARVEY.

(*Brightening.*)

Isn't your aunt coming?

MARY.

Oh, yes, aunty is coming just the same, but now it isn't going to make any difference. We've thought up a dandy scheme. Sit down here, Harvey, and I'll tell you all about it. (*She takes him by the arm and pulls him to chair at right. He is rather reluctant, but she pushes him down into chair, using both hands. She then sits on left side of the chair, putting her right arm firmly about his neck.*) You're going to like this.

HARVEY.

(*Grimly.*)

Maybe; but I doubt it. Whenever you get the "dentist's hold" on me, I know that something painful is going to happen.

MARY.

Why, Harvey, that isn't a nice thing to say, especially when Sylvia and I have fixed up this plan to make things more comfortable for you. Don't you want to hear about it?

HARVEY.

Go ahead.

MARY.

This is it, dear: You're going to be the butler.

HARVEY.

What butler?

MARY.

Our butler. You won't have anything to do but just be here where aunty can see you.

HARVEY.

(*Attempting to rise.*)

This is another one of your moving picture plots, and I am not going to have anything to do with it.

MARY.

Won't you please listen? Aunty expects to find a butler here and—

HARVEY.

Why should your aunt expect to find a butler here? A butler is about the last thing that any sane person would expect to find in a bungalow. Did you tell her that we had a butler?

MARY.

No, I didn't tell her. Lilly Goodrich told her. Now, Harvey, it would only be for one night. Aunty is going to sail to-morrow morning.

HARVEY.

What is it you want me to do?

MARY.

Pretend to be the butler.

HARVEY.

You know I'm an awful dub at making believe anything. Besides it isn't getting anywhere. I intended to leave the house because I thought that I could not remain and retain my dignity. Now you

want me to stay and become a servant—to bow and scrape and maybe accept tips.

MARY.

But it wouldn't be you who was bowing and scraping.

HARVEY.

Who would it be?

MARY.

The butler. And as for tips, aunty never gave anyone a tip in her life. Please, Harvey. Sylvia thinks it's a splendid idea.

HARVEY.

I'd be sure to make a fizzle of the whole business. I don't know how a butler looks or what he does. I never saw a butler.

MARY.

Neither did aunty. Sylvia has lent me all of her beautiful things, and I have worked like a slave all afternoon to make this party a success. Now you are going to spoil it all because you— (*Rises and goes to center.*)

HARVEY.

All right! All right! I'll do it!

MARY.

(*Turns, delighted.*)

You will?

HARVEY.

I will. I'll do the best I can. But I warn you this whole thing is going to be a failure.

MARY.
(*Going close to* HARVEY.)
You're the best husband in the world.

HARVEY.
(*Sighing.*)
I know it.

MARY.
Now what about his livery, Sylvia?

HARVEY.
Livery?

MARY.
Butlers always wear livery. (*To* SYLVIA.) What should it be?

SYLVIA.
Silk stockings, knee breeches, and powdered hair. (*Doubtfully.*) Or is that for footmen?

MARY.
It's butlers. Harvey will look very nice in that costume, if I do say it myself. He has very good legs. They are—

HARVEY.
(*Expostulating.*)
Hush, Mary! Mrs. Allen is not interested in my legs.

SYLVIA.
(*Politely.*)
It's quite all right.

MARY.
(*In deep thought.*)
We could manage the stockings all right, but—

HARVEY.
(*Firmly.*)

I will wear what I am wearing. If you want a butler who looks like Paul Revere, you will have to get another man.

SYLVIA.

I think that Mr. Marshall will do very well just as he is. He looks quite like a butler in that dress suit.

HARVEY.

I wouldn't call that a compliment exactly.

SYLVIA.
(*Distressed.*)

Oh, please! I didn't mean it that way.

HARVEY.

It's all right. I've been taken for a waiter before this, and as I will be the only butler that aunty has ever seen, I may get by. What are a butler's duties?

MARY.

A butler has to—to— What does a butler have to do, Sylvia?

SYLVIA.

He has to announce when dinner is served.

HARVEY.

Is that all?

SYLVIA.

All that I can think of just now.

HARVEY.

A butler must have considerable spare time on his hands.

MARY.

A butler has lots to do. He is the boss. He oversees the work of the chef, the footmen, and the pages. He tells them where they get off.

HARVEY.

We haven't any footmen or pages. Mary, the trouble with this scheme is, you've got your general before you got your army.

MARY.

A butler opens the door when anyone rings.

SYLVIA.

Are you sure about that, Mary? Wouldn't that be beneath a butler's dignity? I rather think the maid would do that.

MARY.

Well, anyway, he announces the names of the guests.

SYLVIA.

Yes.

MARY.

You understand how it is done, don't you, Harvey? When Aunt Emmy and Florence arrive you come in the door like this. (*Goes to front door, left. Suits action to the word.*) Step to one side like this; stand with your heels together and your chest out and say— (*To* SYLVIA.) Which name should he announce first?

HARVEY.

Your aunt's, of course. She is the elder and the more important.

MARY.

That's just the point. She is the more important. Wouldn't it be better to announce the younger one first and aunty last? Sort of work up to a climax, if you know what I mean.

SYLVIA.

I think that he should announce them in the order in which they appear. It would never do to announce your aunt's name if Miss— What's her name?

MARY.

Ainslee; Florence Ainslee.

SYLVIA.

Well, you see what I mean?

Enter STELLA *from kitchen. She is carrying a silver mug, which she places on buffet.*

MARY.

Stella, this is the new butler. (*Indicates* HARVEY.) He will help serve dinner. (HARVEY *looks startled.*) James, I will leave everything in your charge. Come, Sylvia. (*She goes to right, as if about to exit.* HARVEY *makes an inarticulate sound and half rises in his chair.*) And Stella, there will be only four for dinner. (*Exit at right, followed by* SYLVIA.)

STELLA.

(*Taps her head significantly.*)

Bugs!

HARVEY.

(*Puzzled.*)

Bugs?

STELLA.

Yeh. That makes the fourth time she's changed the size of this dinner party. She'll be back in a minute and say it's for eight, or three, or whatever number she thinks of. They call these here bungalows "love nests." They ought to call this one "the cuckoo's nest."

HARVEY.

You evidently don't care for the place.

STELLA.

Oh, I wouldn't go so fur as to say that. Miz' Marshall's kinda nice. I just struck here at the wrong time, that's all. This is movin' day, house-cleanin' day, and home-comin' day all rolled into one afternoon. And in betweens I gotta battle with Roughhouse Willie, the Lightweight Wrastler of the World.

HARVEY.

Rough-house Willie?

STELLA.

Yeh. The baby. You ain't heard him yet? Then you ain't heard nothin' yet. He bellers every three minutes like a guv'mint fog horn on a rock-bound coast. And when he bellers, everybody's gotta let go everything to dash in and give him an argument. (*She begins placing the cutlery around table.*) How do them babies get like that?

HARVEY.

Like what?

STELLA.

Like this here Willie. I been here since two o'clock this afternoon, and Willie has fought me

every inch of the way. I'm wore to a frazzle. He's just startin'. He ain't even warmed up yet. How do they do it?

HARVEY.

Oh, he's just a lively kid. He'll go to sleep when he's tired.

STELLA.

Yeh? Well, I wisht he'd go to sleep when I'm tired. Say! You ain't handcuffed, are you?

HARVEY.

(*Puzzled.*)

Handcuffed?

STELLA.

Yeh. You ain't strapped to that chair? 'Cause if you ain't, you can give me a hand with this table. You're workin' here, too, you know.

HARVEY.

(*Jumps up.*)

I beg your pardon. Of course I'll help. What do you want me to do?

STELLA.

Put them tools around the table.

HARVEY.

Certainly. (*Goes up to buffet, grabs two hands full of silver and begins to distribute the articles about table. His carelessness is in strong contrast to the careful manner in which* STELLA *has been working.*)

STELLA.

(*Coldly, after watching him a moment.*)

I never did work with a butler before. I can see

that you are going to be a great help. G'wan; sit down! (*She goes about table, straightening the silver.*) How'd you get this job, anyway?

HARVEY.

I'll tell you a secret. I'm not a regular butler. This is my first job.

STELLA.

That may be a secret now; but it won't be fur long.

HARVEY.

I would be much obliged if you would tell me exactly what a butler is expected to do.

STELLA.

Sure, I'll tell you. A butler is expected to take care of the baby. There! (*She stands back and looks admiringly at the table.*) Looks kinda pretty; doesn't it?

HARVEY.

It looks beautiful.

STELLA.

Yeh, it looks fine, but lemme whisper something, James. It's the bunk.

HARVEY.

What do you mean?

STELLA.

This stuff don't belong in this house a-tall. Borrowed from next door. Handed through the window.

HARVEY.

Yes?

STELLA.

Fact. Practically everythin' in the house, except the baby, come in through the window.

HARVEY.

A rather cheap way—

STELLA.

Wait a minute! Don't get me wrong. There's nothin' cheap about this family; they're nice people. Leastways, Miz' Marshall is. I ain't seen Mr. Marshall yet. I think he's a prize fighter.

HARVEY.

Prize fighter! (*Curiously.*) What makes you think that?

STELLA.

Miz' Marshall says Willie takes after him. Well, I better ooze out to the kitchen and see what's happened to the dinner by this time. (*Goes up to door.*) You stick around and if you hear something that sounds like the six-o'clock whistle at the sawmill, you'll know that Hard-boiled Willie is awake.

HARVEY.

What shall I do in that case?

STELLA.

Do the best you can. I can't give you no advice. All I know is, keep your chin down so he can't get a half Nelson on you. (*Exit to kitchen.*)

(HARVEY *sits at left. Doorbell is heard, off left.*)

After a short pause, MARY *rushes on at right, followed by* SYLVIA.

MARY.

Quick, Harvey, it's aunty!

HARVEY.

(*Looking at clock.*)

Not yet. It isn't time.

MARY.

(*Looking at clock.*)

That's so; it's only a quarter to seven.

SYLVIA.

It appears to stay a quarter to seven an awfully long time this evening.

MARY.

What? (*She stares at* SYLVIA, *a look of consternation on her face, then runs up to clock, picks it up and places it against her ear.*) It's stopped! (*In a voice of agony.*) Harvey, the clock has stopped! What shall we do?

HARVEY.

Wind it up.

MARY.

(*Wringing her hands.*)

It *is* aunty, and we're not half ready. (*Runs to kitchen door.*) Stella, Stella! (*Runs to* HARVEY.) Get up! Get up! (HARVEY *rises.*) You go to the door, but don't open it. Just stand where you can be seen.

Enter STELLA *by kitchen door.*

MARY.

Stella, the door! Hurry! (*Exit* STELLA *by hall*

door left.) Harvey, remember you have to announce them. Don't do anything stupid.

HARVEY.
(*Mildly.*)

It's a simple matter, my dear. I don't see how I can go wrong.

MARY.

I don't see, either, but I have a feeling that you will.

(*Exit* HARVEY, *left.*)

SYLVIA.
(*Hurriedly.*)

Mary, your apron! Your apron!

MARY.

Oh, gosh! I forgot it! (*She hastily tears off apron. She is wearing evening dress. She looks around for some place to hide apron, throws it under the table, and then tries to push it out of sight with her foot. The apron catches on her heel and as she walks away, it is dragged out into the open again. She sees it, picks it up, runs up to phonograph and, opening the door of the cabinet, thrusts the apron inside. She closes the door of the phonograph, leaving a foot of apron hanging out. She sees this, is about to fix it, but has not time.*)

HARVEY *enters by hall door, left. He steps to one side, below the door, and* MISS EMILY PAISLEY *and* MISS FLORENCE AINSLEE *enter.*

HARVEY.
(*Stands at attention and speaks in a loud voice.*)

Miss Florence—er—ah—blah, blah, and Aunt Emmy!

MARY.

(*In low, despairing voice.*)

I knew it, I knew it! (*More loudly.*) Aunty, dear aunty. (AUNT EMMY *and* MARY *meet at center. They embrace and kiss.*) I'm awfully glad to see you. How are you?

AUNT EMMY.

I'm quite well, Mary. You remember Florence Ainslee; don't you?

MARY.

Of course. (FLORENCE *goes to* MARY. *They embrace and kiss.*) I never would have known you, Flo. You've grown out of all reason. The last time I saw you, you were a little girl in short skirts.

AUNT EMMY.

(*Dryly.*)

She's taller now, but her skirts are just as short.

MARY.

Aunty, this is my friend, Mrs. Allen. Sylvia, this is my cousin, Miss Ainslee. (*The three persons involved in the introduction shake hands. As* SYLVIA *is down right,* AUNT EMMY *and* FLORENCE *face in that direction. The moment they do so,* MARY *sidles up to the phonograph, grabs the protruding apron, wads it up into a bundle, opens the window, hurls the bundle out, closes the window, and comes down stage.* HARVEY *observes this incident with interest. No one else sees it.*) Did you have a very tiresome trip, aunty?

AUNT EMMY.

I didn't feel it so much, but Florence had an attack of train sickness.

MARY.

I'm sorry. Perhaps you would like to lie down for a while.

FLORENCE.

Yes, I would.

Enter STELLA *by left door, carrying two traveling bags.*

MARY.

Never mind the bags, Stella. James will take care of them. Take Miss Ainslee to the blue room.

STELLA.

Yes, Miz' Marshall. (*She goes out at right, followed by* FLORENCE.)

MARY.

(*To* HARVEY.)

James, take the bags to the pink room. (HARVEY *pays no attention.*) James, I'm speaking to you.

HARVEY.

(*Surprised.*)

Who? Me? I thought you said— Oh, yes, I see. Where shall I take them? (*Picks up bags.*)

MARY.

To the pink room.

HARVEY.

(*Carries bags to door right. Turns.*)

Where did you say I was to take them?

MARY.

(*Impatiently.*)

To the pink room—the guest room.

HARVEY.

Oh, yes. The big spare room right next to ours. (*Exit.*)

(MARY *and* SYLVIA *look scared, but* AUNT EMMY *has evidently not observed the break. She is looking about the room.*)

MARY.

James is so stupid. I find it very difficult to get good servants. Would you like to go to your room, Aunt Emmy?

AUNT EMMY.

Don't hurry me, child. Let me get my breath. (*Sits at right.*) You have a very pretty home, Mary; very pretty.

MARY.

We like it. (*Sits at right of table.* SYLVIA *sits at left.*)

AUNT EMMY.

It is furnished in excellent taste. I like those curtains very much.

MARY.

Sylvia chose the curtains.

AUNT EMMY.

Mrs. Allen has a sense of color.

SYLVIA.

Thank you.

AUNT EMMY.

Your silver is beautiful, Mary.

MARY.

Wedding presents. (*Rises and goes to buffet. Picks up mug.*) You remember this?

AUNT EMMY.

Of course. It's the mug I sent the baby. How is he?

MARY.

He is splendid.

AUNT EMMY.

And how is your husband?

MARY.

He's well. He isn't here just now. Just as soon as I got your wire, I tried to get him on the phone, but I couldn't locate him. He travels a great deal —always taking trains.

HARVEY *enters, right.*

AUNT EMMY.

But my dear child, this is going to spoil everything. I must see your husband.

MARY.

I am afraid that it cannot be managed, that is, if you are sailing to-morrow.

AUNT EMMY.

Then I won't sail to-morrow. Why, I made this trip for the express purpose of seeing Mr. Marshall. I have decided that Grandpa Paisley's property should go to your son—to Willie. I had the deeds made out for the hundred-acre timber lot and the Paisley ranch—had them made out in Willie's name. I have them here with me, and I intended to turn

them over to your husband. So you see I just have to see him before I go.

(*During the above speech an expression of horror has settled on* MARY'S *face.* HARVEY *and* SYLVIA *look concerned.*)

MARY.
(*In agitation.*)

I—I—really don't know what to say, aunty. If I knew—if I could—if Harvey were here— Oh, I don't know what to do! Wouldn't you like to see the baby?

AUNT EMMY.
(*Rising.*)

Of course. (*Goes to door, right.*) But you will try to get in communication with your husband?

MARY.

Yes. I—I—I'll think up something.

(*Exit* AUNT EMMY *at right.* MARY, *giving* HARVEY *and* SYLVIA *a tragic look, follows her.* HARVEY *goes down right.*)

SYLVIA.

This is rather awful, Mr. Marshall.

HARVEY.
(*Gloomily.*)

It's about what I expected. (*Sits.*) It's the way Mary's schemes always turn out.

STELLA *enters, door right. She looks in surprise at* HARVEY, *probably wondering why he should be*

seated. She crosses left and goes out by kitchen door.

SYLVIA.

What are you going to do?

HARVEY.

I don't know, but Mary does. Mrs. Allen, Mary is the best wife in the world. She is entirely too good for me, but there is just one thing wrong with her: She has plots.

SYLVIA.

Plots?

HARVEY.

Moving-picture plots. Life to Mary is one long film drama. She sees it in terms of flash-backs, close-ups, and fade-outs. Every man in overalls is an honest workingman. Every woman with a French accent is an adventuress. Every saphead with curly blond hair is a hero.

SYLVIA.

She has a lively imagination.

HARVEY.

(*Sighing.*)

She has. It has caused me lots of trouble in the past. When we were first married, we sublet some rooms to another couple. Mary grew to be quite fond of the other woman and they exchanged confidences. Mary told her that I wasn't what I appeared to be; that I really was the Marquis of Something-or-other, an Italian nobleman in disguise. She said that I had to flee from Europe because I was closely related to the royal family, and the Reds

were trying to force me to start a revolution with the idea of crowning me king.

SYLVIA.

She was just dramatizing her dreams.

HARVEY.

Call it that, if you want to.

SYLVIA.

It didn't really do any harm.

HARVEY.

No real harm, of course. But the husband of this woman happened to be a shipping clerk for the firm that employed me. Naturally he told the rest of the clerks about what Mary had said. They kidded the life out of me. For a long time, they called me the Marquis of Market Street. Right to-day, there are lots of people who think that my first name is Mark.

SYLVIA.

I am sure that Mary doesn't mean to—

HARVEY.

Don't imagine that I am complaining, Mrs. Allen. The trouble is that I can't keep up with Mary.

MARY *rushes on, right.*

MARY.

You heard what she said? Harvey, what are we going to do? What *are* we going to do?

HARVEY.

(*Rising.*)

Now, my dear, don't get excited. There is only

one thing that we can do: Tell her the truth. Say that it is all a joke.

MARY.

No, no! Aunty would never forgive us. She can't take a joke. She can't even see one. We must think of something else. Willie must have that property. He has a right to it. He looks exactly like Grandpa Paisley.

HARVEY.

But what else is there to do? Your aunt says that she will not leave until she has seen me.

SYLVIA.

Oh, I think that she will probably change her mind about that. She has her tickets and—

MARY.

That won't make any difference. Aunty never changed her mind in her life. She will stay here forever, and Harvey will have to go on being a butler till his beard is a yard long. (*A thought strikes her.*) Beard! Whiskers! That's it!

HARVEY.

What's it?

MARY.

(*Excitedly.*)

Whiskers. You could put on a pair of false whiskers and say that you missed the train.

HARVEY.

(*Bewildered.*)

What the deuce are you talking about?

MARY.

Don't you see? All you have to do is to disguise

yourself as my husband, come rushing in, and say that you have missed the train. Aunty will give you the deeds, or whatever they are and—

HARVEY.
(*Wearily.*)

Oh, Mary, please give your imagination a rest. See the mess that your plots have got us into already.

MARY.

Don't you want Willie to get that property?

HARVEY.

Of course I want him to get it. It would give him a college course when he grows up, and it would give him a foothold in the business world. But I have the kind of a face that nothing can disguise. If I were to put on a false beard, your aunt would simply look at me and say, "This butler has remarkably fast-growing whiskers."

MARY.

What do you think, Sylvia?

SYLVIA.

I think that we had better have dinner.

MARY.

Of course. Poor dear, you must be starving. Just as soon as aunty arrives, we will have it served. Florence isn't dining. She has a headache. I must tell Stella that. (*Goes to kitchen door.*) Stella! (*Returns to center.*)

Enter STELLA *by kitchen door.*

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am.

MARY.

There will be only three for dinner.

STELLA.

Yes, Miz' Marshall. (*Gives* HARVEY *an "I-told-you-so" look, and exit.*)

HARVEY.

Three?

MARY.

Sylvia, aunty, and I.

HARVEY.

What about me?

MARY.

You don't eat with us. You eat with Stella in the kitchen.

HARVEY.

Hey? Oh, yes, I see. Well, I won't wait; I'm starving. (*Exit by kitchen door.*)

MARY.

(*Going to* SYLVIA.)

Sylvia, I've got an idea. I couldn't tell you while Harvey was in the room. It doesn't make any difference whom aunty gives those deeds to. There is nothing to be signed or anything like that. I asked her. She wants to ask Harvey's forgiveness for the nasty letter she wrote him, and then she wants to make him feel bad by giving him the deeds. You know—coals of fire or something.

SYLVIA.

Even so, what difference will that—?

MARY.

Wait! Don't you see the idea? Any man would do, as long as aunty thinks that he is Harvey. We will have to get some one to pretend to be my husband for a couple of hours.

SYLVIA.

But where are you going to get the man? You can't very well telephone to an employment bureau and ask them to send you a husband.

MARY.

I understand that.

SYLVIA.

I would loan you Tom, if he were here, but he isn't.

MARY.

Tom would have done splendidly. Can't you think of anyone else?

SYLVIA.

There is Bob.

MARY.

Your brother?

SYLVIA.

Yes.

MARY.

Would he do it?

SYLVIA.

Of course. But you know he's on the *Gazette*. He may be working nights.

MARY.

How could we find out?

SYLVIA.

His rooms are just around the corner. I'll try to get him on the phone. (*Goes to phone.*)

MARY.

Sylvia, you're a dear. (*Goes to right and stands near door, as if watching for* AUNT EMMY.)

SYLVIA.

(*In phone.*)

Chadwick 8808. (*Pauses.*) Yes. (*Pauses.*) Is that you, Bob? (*Pauses. To* MARY.) He isn't there.

MARY.

(*Moans.*)

Do they know where he is?

SYLVIA.

(*In phone.*)

Who is this speaking? (*Pauses.*) Oh! (*Pauses.*) Not the one from out west somewhere? Not the one he calls Jerry? (*Pauses.*) I am Bob's sister, Sylvia. (*Pauses.*) Yes, I've heard him speak of you too. Where is Bob? (*Pauses.*) Oh, that is too bad! Yes, it was quite important. (*Pauses.*) No, thank you. Wait a moment, please. (*She puts her hand over the mouthpiece and speaks to* MARY.) Bob is on an assignment. He will be away all night.

MARY.

Who is speaking?

SYLVIA.

A friend, who is visiting Bob. His name is Jerry —er—Muncey, I think. He wants to know if there is anything he can do. Do you suppose—?

MARY.

Oh, Sylvia! Not a perfect stranger!

SYLVIA.

Why not?

MARY.

He might have a wife already.

SYLVIA.

What difference would that make?

MARY.

Lots. I wouldn't want a married man for my husband.

SYLVIA.

I'll ask him if he's married. (*In phone.*) Hello! Are you married? (*Pauses. To* MARY.) He says, "Not yet."

MARY.

All right. He'll do.

SYLVIA.

(*In phone.*)

There *is* something that you can do Mr.—er—Jerry. I have a very dear friend who wants some man to pose as her husband for a couple of hours. (*Pauses.*) Husband. (*Pauses.*) No. HUSBAND! H, as in Heaven. U, as in Utica. S, as in Syracuse. B—a—n—d. Husband. Yes. (*Pauses.*) No no! She already has one husband, but he is not available. This is merely a business transaction. (*To* MARY.) He says that he will be delighted.

MARY.

(*Crosses to* SYLVIA.)

Let me have the phone, dear. (*Takes phone and*

sits. SYLVIA *goes to center.*) Mrs. Marshall speaking. I am the friend Sylvia was talking about. It is extremely good of you to say that you will help me out, Mr.—er—Jerry. Will you listen carefully, please? I am at 3545 Spruce Avenue. Right around the corner from where you are now. Have you a traveling bag? (*Pauses.*) No, don't stop to pack it. Bring it just as it is, as quickly as you can. When you get to the house, don't ring. Walk right in. (*Pauses.*) The door will be unlatched. Turn to the left as you enter the hall and open the first door that you come to. I will be there. Listen, please; this is important. If there is an elderly woman in the room with me, this is what you must do: Look at me and say, "Darling, I missed the train!" Then you must throw the bag on the floor, rush over to me, take me in your arms and kiss me. (*Pauses.*)

SYLVIA.
(*Eagerly.*)
What did he say?

MARY.
(*To* SYLVIA.)
He didn't say anything. I think he has fainted. (*Jiggles receiver on hook. Speaks into mouthpiece.*) Hello! Are you still there? (*Pauses.*) No, no! Once will be enough. You will? Hurry, please. (*Pauses.*) Thank you. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver and rises.*)

SYLVIA.
Is he going to do it?

MARY.
Yes. (*Sighs.*) Gosh, I hope he's the right kind of a man.

SYLVIA.

Of course he's the right kind of a man. He's Bob's best friend. And while I have a sister's opinion of a brother's faults, I know that Bob wouldn't associate with a man of low morals.

MARY.

I wasn't thinking of his morals. I was thinking of his height. If his hair isn't the right color, I can say that he had typhoid or something, and when his hair grew in it grew in a different shade. But I don't know what I can say happened to a man to make him a foot shorter.

SYLVIA.

I don't know, either.

MARY.

I'll fix that latch. (*Exit by door at left.*)

(SYLVIA *goes to right and sits.*)

Enter MARY.

SYLVIA.

Are you going to tell Mr. Marshall about it, Mary?

MARY.

Why, of course. I always tell Harvey everything. But I think that I won't tell him about this till it is all over. It will save a lot of argument. (*Goes to kitchen door.*) Stella! (*Comes to center.*)

Enter STELLA *by kitchen door.*

STELLA.

Yes, Miz' Marshall.

MARY.

There will be four for dinner.

STELLA.

Yes, Miz' Marshall. (*Exit by kitchen door.*)

AUNT EMMY *enters at right. She has removed her hat.*

MARY.

Aunty, you must be starving. I will have dinner served at once. I am sorry that Florence isn't well. Do you think that I ought to phone for a doctor?

AUNT EMMY.

(*Smiles.*)

Well, Mary, I think that if you would get the right doctor, it would do Florence a world of good.

MARY.

(*Puzzled.*)

The right doctor?

AUNT EMMY.

Yes. Dr. Niles, a young man who practices somewhere in Indiana.

MARY.

I'm afraid that—

AUNT EMMY.

Don't worry, Mary. Florence will get the doctor in the morning, and once she gets him, she will keep him for the rest of her life. Dr. Niles and Florence are to be married to-morrow.

MARY.

Well, forevermore!

AUNT EMMY.

She met him while she was at Ann Arbor. They fell in love with each other and wanted to marry right away. Very much the same case as you and Mr. Marshall.

SYLVIA.

Young people never learn wisdom from the experiences of others.

AUNT EMMY.

(*Dryly.*)

No, but older people do. I learned that it was useless to interfere with two young people who imagine themselves in love. However, I insisted that I must see the young man before I would give my consent to the marriage.

SYLVIA.

Then you haven't met the doctor yet?

AUNT EMMY.

Not yet.

MARY.

Why didn't he go out to Boggs' Corners and be married there?

AUNT EMMY.

Why didn't Mr. Marshall?

MARY.

Why—er—

AUNT EMMY.

(*Dryly.*)

Exactly. I imagine it's the same way with the doctor. We are to meet him to-morrow in the foyer of the Astor Hotel. If everything is satisfactory

they will be married at ten o'clock. I was to sail at twelve. Have you tried to locate your husband?

MARY.

Sylvia and I have been telephoning. (*She looks nervously at front door, left.*) Where are they going on their honeymoon trip?

AUNT EMMY.

Nowhere. They are going to settle down at once. I am taking the honeymoon trip.

MARY.

Whatever gave you the idea of going to Europe?

AUNT EMMY.

Well, Mrs. John Cummings made the trip, and I have as much money as she has. Mary, the airs that woman puts on are sickening. She brought a few gowns and hats from Paris, and a couple of catacombs from Rome, and there's no living in the same town with her.

MARY.

I remember her. She could get Ritzy on the least provocation.

AUNT EMMY.

She is worse now. It seems that she was in Naples when the Vatican was in eruption, and she never gets through talking about it. You'd think she had invented it.

SYLVIA.

(*Doubtfully.*)

Vatican?

AUNT EMMY.

Yes. The Vatican is in Naples; isn't it?

SYLVIA.

I think not. I think that the Vatican is in Rome. Naples is gondolas—or is it the sphinx?

MARY.

Oh, Sylvia! Not the sphinx. The sphinx and the pyramids are in Egypt. Don't you remember? They are on the river Nile, near Constantinople. (*She has been eyeing the door, left, with increasing nervousness. She now turns to* SYLVIA *and gives her a significant look.*) I think that we had better not wait any longer, Sylvia. (*Goes up stage behind table.*) I am going to put you here, aunty. (*Pulls out a chair.*) Sylvia, you sit opposite. I will tell James to serve at once. (*Exit into kitchen.*)

(AUNT EMMY *goes up to place above table.* SYLVIA *rises.*)

JERRY *enters hurriedly by door at right. He is dressed in a light, summer suit and carries a traveling bag. He stands a moment looking about room, then fixes his eyes on* SYLVIA.

JERRY.

Darling, I've missed the train! (*Throws traveling bag on floor, rushes over to* SYLVIA, *throws arms about her, and kisses her.*)

(*For a moment* SYLVIA *is paralyzed; she can neither speak nor move. Then she recovers and tries to make the best of the situation. She twists to the left so that* JERRY *has to release her. This maneuver leaves them both standing with their backs to* AUNT EMMY. SYLVIA *punches him violently below the chest with her elbow, twice.* JERRY *backs away in alarm.*)

SYLVIA.
(*With emphasis.*)

My dear *brother*, you should not waste kisses on a *sister*. You should keep them for your *wife*.

JERRY.
(*Startled.*)

Hey?

SYLVIA.
(*Indicating* AUNT EMMY.)

Harvey, this is your Aunt Emmy, whom you have never seen. She has just arrived unexpectedly from California.

JERRY.
(*With great heartiness.*)

Well, well, well! So this is Aunt Emmy? (*Goes up stage and kisses* AUNT EMMY.) And how is—ah—California?

AUNT EMMY.
(*Perplexed, to* SYLVIA.)

Are you and Mary sisters-in-law?

SYLVIA.

Didn't you know?

A procession now enters from kitchen. The procession is headed by HARVEY, *carrying a tray of soup plates.* STELLA *follows him, also carrying a tray upon which is a soup tureen.* MARY *brings up the rear.*

SYLVIA.

Here is your wife now.

JERRY.
(*Looking at* MARY.)
Darling, I've missed the train.

MARY.
Harvey! My husband!

(*They rush together, meet at center, and embrace.* JERRY *kisses her lovingly.* HARVEY, *astounded, stands staring at them. His jaw drops. So does one side of the tray that he is carrying. The soup plates slither off and fall with a crash to the floor.*)

POSITIONS:

STELLA
AUNT EMMY HARVEY

Table

JERRY MARY
SYLVIA

CURTAIN

HER STEP-HUSBAND

Second Act

Scene One

Scene: *Same as in Act I. It is evening, two hours later.*

At rise of curtain, Mary, Aunt Emmy, Jerry, Sylvia, Stella, *and* Harvey *are discovered.* Mary *is seated at left of table,* Aunt Emmy *above table,* Jerry *at right of table, and* Sylvia *below table.* Stella *is at buffet, and* Harvey *is standing behind* Jerry's *chair.*

The dinner has evidently reached the last course. The table is cleared, and Stella *is serving a dessert from the buffet. It is a fruit confection of some sort, and its outstanding feature is whipped cream.* Harvey, *in the capacity of butler, is standing with folded arms, gloomily overseeing the service.*

Jerry.
(*Looking over his shoulder.*)
James.

Harvey.
Yes, sir.

Jerry.
Put on a record.

Harvey.
Yes, sir. (*Goes to phonograph, up right.*)

MARY.

One of the quieter ones, James. Aunty doesn't like noisy music.

(HARVEY *opens the door of the cabinet; there are no records there. He looks anxiously about the room but cannot find any.*)

SYLVIA.

I just love that *Cavatina* of Raff's.

JERRY.

Put on Raff's *Cavatina*, James.

HARVEY.

(*Has discovered one lone disk on the phonograph ready to be played. He lifts it off and looks on both sides of it.*)

Er—we appear to be all out of cavatinas, Raff's or otherwise, but we have some nice— I mean, how would this do? It's entitled: (*reads*) *The*—ah—*Boiler Factory Blues.*

MARY.

(*Impatiently.*)

No, no! I tell you aunty does not like jazz music.

(STELLA, *having placed the dessert in front of each person at the table, picks up tray from buffet and goes out by kitchen door.* HARVEY *fiddles around phonograph, places record, and winds up, all ready to start.*)

SYLVIA.

(*To* AUNT EMMY.)

You evidently do not dance.

AUNT EMMY.

I do not, and I have no patience with women of my age who do. I can find better ways of spending my time than going about dancing fox-trots and banana splits.

JERRY.

I very seldom dance, myself. I'm so tired when I return from business that I don't feel like exerting myself.

AUNT EMMY.

I imagine your business *is* tiring. How do you like butter and eggs?

JERRY.

(*Puzzled.*)

I beg your pardon?

AUNT EMMY.

I say: How do you like butter and eggs?

JERRY.

(*Looking suspiciously at the plate in front of him.*)

I don't think that I ever tried it. It sounds rather messy. (*He sees by the look on the faces of* MARY *and* SYLVIA *that he has made a mistake. He turns to* AUNT EMMY.) Did you say, "butter*ing* eggs," or "butter *on* eggs"?

AUNT EMMY.

(*Tartly.*)

I said neither one. I said, "butter *and* eggs." That's your business; isn't it?

JERRY.

Oh, yes, yes, I see what you mean now. My business. You were regarding the egg from the com-

mercial side, while I was looking at it as a er—social— Start the phonograph, James.

HARVEY.

Yes, sir. (*He sets needle and starts phonograph. It should be a loud, jazzy record.*)

MARY.

(*Hands over ears.*)

Stop it! Stop it at once. That is terrible.

(HARVEY *stops phonograph.*)

AUNT EMMY.

You have a very nice place here, Mr. Marshall.

JERRY.

We like it. Of course it's rather small. I am thinking of building an extension next spring. Pleasant weather we are having.

AUNT EMMY.

It is, if you like it hot. I was nearly suffocated on the train. We are not used to such temperatures out in California. How does Willie stand the heat?

JERRY.

Willie who?

AUNT EMMY.

The baby.

JERRY.

What baby?

MARY.

(*Hastily.*)

Don't be stupid, Harvey. Aunty means our Willie, of course. (*Addresses the following lines to*

AUNT EMMY, *but is really trying to convey information to* JERRY.) Willie stands the heat splendidly. He has never had a day's sickness in his life. (*Everybody "knocks wood."* SYLVIA, AUNT EMMY, *and* JERRY *lift tablecloth and hit table.* MARY *rises and raps on buffet while* HARVEY *knocks on phonograph.*) And he's fourteen months old, and he weighs twenty-two pounds. And his name is William Paisley Marshall. We named him after grandpa. And he has blue eyes, and light complexion, and—

AUNT EMMY.
(*Expostulating.*)

My dear Mary, it isn't necessary to give me a description of the child. I've seen him.

MARY.
(*Sits.*)

I know. But he was asleep. You haven't any idea what he looks like when he's awake. He's awfully cute.

SYLVIA.

And bright! Mary, tell your aunt what Willie said the other morning.

AUNT EMMY.

Said? You don't mean to say that that fourteen-months'-old baby actually talks!

JERRY.

Oh, fluently!

MARY.

Of course. I don't mean to say that he says real words, but in his own way he makes the most cunning remarks. The other morning when Harvey was

leaving to go down to the store, he kissed me. Willie looked up and saw us kissing, and what do you think he said? He said, "Goo!" Just like that.

JERRY.
(*Heartily.*)

Yes, sir, that's what he said. "Goo." And he couldn't have expressed it better if he had used a hundred words. How's the Japanese situation out in California?

AUNT EMMY.

I don't know anything about it. Mary, I had the impression that your husband was a very tall man. Didn't you write Lilly that he—

MARY.

Harvey is much taller when he is standing up.

SYLVIA.

Whom do you think the baby resembles, Miss Paisley?

MARY.
(*Hastily.*)

Oh, there isn't any doubt about that, Sylvia. He looks exactly like Grandpa Paisley. Doesn't he, aunty?

AUNT EMMY.

Not in the least. He doesn't resemble any of our family. He looks exactly like his father here. (*Nods toward* JERRY.)

MARY.
(*Faintly.*)

Fetch the coffee, James.

(*Exit* HARVEY, *by kitchen door.*)

SYLVIA.

I think that his mouth and chin are exactly like Mary's.

AUNT EMMY.

He may resemble her in some individual feature, but his entire expression is like Mr. Marshall's. I can see it as plain as day.

MARY.

(*Sulkily.*)

Willie's cutting his teeth. That's what makes him look like that.

JERRY.

My dear aunt, I take issue with you in this matter. I think the child resembles his grandfather.

AUNT EMMY.

Nonsense! Where is there any similarity?

JERRY.

Well, for one thing they are—ah—they are both slightly bald. How is grandpa, by the way?

AUNT EMMY.

(*Coldly.*)

Grandpa is dead.

JERRY.

Tut, tut, that's too bad! When did that happen? I never knew that he was sick.

AUNT EMMY.

It happened sixteen years ago.

STELLA *appears at kitchen door.*

STELLA.

Oh, Miz' Marshall.

MARY.

What is it, Stella?

STELLA.

Miz' Allen's maid is in the kitchen here and she says Miz' Allen's wanted on the 'foam—long distance. (*Exit* STELLA *by kitchen door.*)

SYLVIA.

(*Rising.*)

It must be Tom. I wonder what's the matter. Will you excuse me, Mary?

MARY.

Of course, dear. Take the short cut. You will come back, won't you?

SYLVIA.

(*At window.*)

I can't promise. The call might be something important.

(JERRY, *who has risen during the above, helps* SYLVIA *through the window. He closes window and comes back to table.*)

JERRY.

Splendid girl, Sylvia. One of the best sisters I ever had. (*Sits.*)

AUNT EMMY.

A very attractive woman.

MARY.

She's a dear, and so is Tom.

JERRY.

Yes, Tom is a splendid fellow. Just worships his wife. No matter where he is, he gets out of bed in the middle of the night and telephones her.

AUNT EMMY.

What business is he in?

JERRY.

Who? Tom? What business?

MARY.

He's in plumbing fixtures—specializes in bathtubs. Tom is doing very well. In this block alone there are three houses built for newly married couples, and Tom's firm got contracts for every one of them.

JERRY.

Oh, Tom's a hustler, all right. His slogan is: "You furnish the bride, and we furnish the bathtub."

AUNT EMMY.

A man has to be a hustler to get along in business these days.

HARVEY *enters by kitchen door with a tray of cups and saucers, which he places on buffet.*

JERRY.

Yes. But there are certain kinds of business in which it does not pay to hustle. Tom can afford to increase the demand for bathtubs because he controls the source of supply. But take my line—butter and eggs. Our slogan is: "Direct from hen to customer!" Suppose I were to get out and hustle. Suppose that, by sheer force of personal magnetism

and good salesmanship, I were to increase the demand for eggs. What would happen? Why the minute my back was turned the confounded hens would lay down on me—! That's an unfortunate figure. What I mean is: The hens would stop laying. I would have created the demand, but my supply would be cut off at the source. Again, let us take butter. Butter, as you no doubt are aware, comes from milk; and milk, in turn, comes from the cow. Now the average cow may continue to give milk year in, year out, for an indefinite period. On the other hand, for no apparent reason, she may suddenly vote herself dry. Then where are you? The hen and the cow have no standard of ethics and— (*During this monologue,* HARVEY *and* MARY *have been showing symptoms of nervousness.* HARVEY, *unable to stand it any longer, goes to right and starts phonograph.*) James, stop that confounded racket while I am talking.

HARVEY.

Yes, sir. (*Shuts off phonograph.*)

JERRY.

Where was I? Oh, yes. The cow—

MARY.

(*Desperately.*)

That reminds me, aunty: How is Daisy?

AUNT EMMY.

Daisy is quite well. Mr. Marvin is taking care of her, out at the ranch, till I return.

MARY.

You don't know how I missed Daisy at first. That

pathetic look in her soft brown eyes! I often speak to Harvey about her.

JERRY.

She mentions Daisy, on an average, three times every week.

MARY.

How old is she?

(HARVEY *places two cups and saucers in front of* MARY *and returns to buffet.*)

AUNT EMMY.

Daisy will be eleven years old this coming spring.

JERRY.

(*Brightly.*)

Well, well! Eleven years old! The first thing we know she will be going to high school.

(*This is evidently a bad break.* AUNT EMMY *looks surprised.* MARY *and* HARVEY *look terrified.*)

MARY.

(*Hopelessly.*)

I think that you had better smoke, Harvey. I am sure that aunty won't object.

AUNT EMMY.

Of course not. We aren't quite as old-fashioned as that, even in Boggs' Corners.

JERRY.

Thank you. I think I will have a cigar. (*Rises, goes to buffet, and takes cigar from box.*) Mary is the best little wife in the world; always looking out for my comfort. (*To* MARY, *with elephantine*

playfulness.) Just for that, you are going to get a nice big kiss.

(MARY *turns her face away to hide the savage expression that she cannot control. Her hand involuntarily closes on a spoon, which is lying on the table. She holds it as if it were a dagger, and it is evident that her aunt's presence is all that restrains her from stabbing* JERRY. *However, she manages to force a smile, and to turn her face up to receive the promised kiss.* JERRY *goes over to* MARY *and kisses her.* HARVEY, *as before, sees the kiss, and, as before, drops something. This time it is a coffee cup, which he has been about to carry from buffet to table.*)

AUNT EMMY.
(*Looking around at* HARVEY.)
It must be expensive to keep a butler.

(MARY *looks apprehensively at* HARVEY. HARVEY *picks up the pieces.* JERRY *returns to his seat, passing in front of the table.*)

STELLA *enters, from kitchen, carrying coffee urn on tray. She places the urn on table beside* MARY, *then goes out by kitchen door with tray.* HARVEY, *picking up tray from buffet, follows her.*

JERRY.
Excellent butler, James, but careless with crockery.

MARY.
(*Pouring coffee.*)
Sugar and cream, aunty?

AUNT EMMY.

I don't drink coffee, thank you. It keeps me awake.

MARY.

Of course. I remember now. (*To* JERRY.) Do you take sugar and cream, Harvey? (*Another bad break!* AUNT EMMY *looks surprised.* JERRY *looks uncomfortable.* MARY *is the last to see it. Suddenly it dawns on her. She forces a laugh.*) Seems odd for one to ask one's husband if one's husband took cream and sugar, doesn't one? I mean, doesn't it? But you see, you never can tell about Harvey. One day he likes cream without sugar, and the next day he likes sugar without cream.

JERRY.

Yes. Never allow myself to get into a rut. Some people go on taking their coffee the same way all of their lives. Not me. I like a change. Let me see. This evening, I think I'll take it black, with one lump.

(MARY *pours coffee and hands it to him.*)

AUNT EMMY.

Mary, now that your husband is here, we had better settle about grandpa's property.

MARY.

Yes, aunty.

AUNT EMMY.
(*To* JERRY.)

You will no doubt remember that grandpa had property, even if you have forgotten that he is dead.

JERRY.

Yes. I remember the property.

AUNT EMMY.

It was left to me in trust to be passed on to whomever I decided would make the best use of it. Of course, I always intended that Mary should have it, but she chose to run away with you and get married; so I decided to give it to her cousin Florence instead.

JERRY.

I think you are making a mistake, aunty. The thing to do—

AUNT EMMY.

I know exactly what to do. I am going to turn the property over to your son. You are to act as trustee until the child is of age.

JERRY.

This is very kind of you. I hardly know what to say.

AUNT EMMY.

You don't have to say anything. I am doing this to atone for some very harsh things I wrote you when you and Mary were first married. I hope that you will forget them.

JERRY.

I have already forgotten them.

AUNT EMMY.

(*Rises.*)

I have some deeds and other documents that I wish you to look over. They are in my bag. I will get them. (*Crosses to right.*)

JERRY.
(*Rising.*)

I shall be glad to look them over.

(*Exit* AUNT EMMY *by right door. The moment that she has disappeared,* MARY *rises and goes to* JERRY.)

MARY.
(*Fiercely.*)

Can't you manage to get along without kissing me every three minutes?

JERRY.
(*Startled.*)

Hey?

MARY.

You haven't been in the house more than a couple of hours, and you've kissed me a half a dozen times. What's your idea for that?

JERRY.

Why, I— It was for your aunt's benefit. I was trying to give the situation an atmosphere of realism—happy married couple, you know, and all that sort of thing.

MARY.

Is that your idea of married life?

JERRY.

Yes.

MARY.

You have a lot to learn.

JERRY.

Is kissing no longer in vogue among the married set?

MARY.

Within reasonable limits—yes. But you appear to think that married life is a taffy boat sailing in a sea of syrup.

JERRY.

I see what you mean. Thanks for the tip. I'm going to be married myself pretty soon. If there is anything else you can tell me I—

MARY.

I can't give you any inside information. You will have to find out for yourself, the same as the rest of us had to. And, for goodness' sake, don't talk so much. You are bound to make breaks. (*Bitterly.*) That remark about Daisy going to high school was awful.

JERRY.

Why?

MARY.

Daisy is a cow.

JERRY.

Oh, boy! I thought that she was Aunt Emmy's daughter.

MARY.

(*Coldly.*)

Aunt Emmy is not married. (*She turns away and goes to left.*)

HARVEY *enters at kitchen door.* JERRY, *who is beginning to get angry, turns and sees him.*

JERRY.

James, leave the room! My wife and I wish to be alone.

HARVEY.

Yes, sir. (*Looks at* MARY *and goes out at kitchen door.*)

JERRY.

The trouble is, I haven't got the facts. If you would tell me what this is all about, I wouldn't make so many bad breaks.

MARY.

It's too late now. You've made all the breaks there were to make. Just go ahead and do the best you can. Only, for Pete's sake, don't be so sweet. Don't agree with everything that I say. Married folks are not like that. Far from it! Don't be afraid to contradict me. I don't want aunty to think that Harvey is henpecked, and I don't want her to think that I married a "yessir." Don't be afraid to say what you think. Be master in your own house.

JERRY.

I'll do the best I can. How long is this business going to last?

MARY.

Until about eight o'clock to-morrow morning. Aunty is sailing at twelve, and she has an important engagement at ten.

JERRY.

So have I. I am going to get married at ten.

MARY.

Everybody in the city must be going to be married to-morrow at ten. Your room is the first one to the right.

JERRY.

Thanks. If you will excuse me, I will put my bag in the room. (*Crosses left and picks up bag from floor where he threw it in the previous act.*)

MARY.

(*Meeting him at center as he starts back to right.*)

Please don't think that we don't appreciate what you are doing for us. I am under considerable nervous strain, and it makes me short-tempered.

JERRY.

I understand, Mrs. Marshall, and it's perfectly all right. I am going to do my darnedest.

MARY.

You are doing fine, as it is. Only, if you feel that you just have to kiss me, please wait till the servants are out of the room.

JERRY.

Yes. I notice that it seems to have a bad effect on James. Makes him drop things.

MARY.

I'm satisfied to have him drop them. I'm thankful that he doesn't start throwing them. You had better hurry now. Don't keep aunty waiting. (*Exit* JERRY, *by arch, right.* MARY *crosses to kitchen door. Calls.*) Stella! (*Comes to right center.*)

STELLA *enters by kitchen door.*

MARY.

Stella, you may clear away now.

STELLA.

Yes, Miz' Marshall. (*Goes to table and starts to collect cups and saucers.*)

MARY.

And when you have finished with the dishes, I want you to get some bed linen out of the closet and make up a bed on the lounge in the kitchen. I will sleep there to-night.

STELLA.

Yes, Miz' Marshall. Don't James have to help wash the dishes?

MARY.

No. You will have to learn to get along without James, Stella. He won't be with us long.

STELLA.

(*Stops work.*)

You mean you're goin' to let him out?

MARY.

Let him out?

STELLA.

Fire him.

MARY.

Something like that.

STELLA.

O' course, I know James ain't much use just now, but he's awfully quick at pickin' up things.

MARY.

(*Grimly.*)

He ought to be. He's certainly quick at dropping them.

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am, he's sure got six thumbs on each hand. Same time, he'll learn; and what I was goin' to say, Miz' Marshall, is: I wouldn't mind doin' his work till he gets hep, and in the evenin's I could learn him all the things he don't know.

MARY.

Why are you so interested in James?

STELLA.

Well, Miz' Marshall, I ain't ever worked out in the country before, and I guess it is goin' to be kinda lonesome. And I was thinkin' James would be handy to have around to help put in the time, such as takin' me to the movies and such.

MARY.

(*Giving* STELLA *a hard look.*)

Has it ever occurred to you that James might be a married man?

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am; he's married.

MARY.

How do you know?

STELLA.

I asked him. But he don't live with his wife. (*Lowering her voice, confidentially.*) I don't guess she amounts to much.

MARY.

Indeed. Did James tell you that?

STELLA.

No, Miz' Marshall, he ain't told me; but I can see

it by his face. He's got an expression like he's goin' to get a divorce any minute.

MARY.

Stella, I'm surprised at you, gossiping like this. Hurry and get the table cleared. My aunt and my —er—husband have some important business to talk over, and they do not wish to be interrupted. (*Goes to right.*)

STELLA.

Yes, Miz' Marshall.

MARY.

We will leave the baby's crib in your room for to-night. (*Exit, right.*)

(STELLA *goes to kitchen door and opens it.*)

STELLA.

Hey, Jimmie, bring a tray! (*Goes back to table.*)

HARVEY *enters by kitchen door with tray.*

STELLA.

(*Taking tray.*)

Miz' Marshall says you got to help me with the dishes. Say, her and hubby must 'a' had a scrap, I guess.

HARVEY.

What makes you think so?

STELLA.

She's goin' to sleep on the lounge in the kitchen.

HARVEY.

Yes?

STELLA.

Yeh; she wished the baby on me. (*Returns to table and stacks dishes on tray.*) Listen, me lad, you'd better watch your step. Miz' Marshall ain't so strong for you.

HARVEY.

Did she tell you so?

STELLA.

Yeh. Not more'n a minute ago, right in here. She says, "Stella, that big stiff James don't know no more about buttlin' than I do about the flyin' trapeze. I'm goin' to give him the gate."

HARVEY.

Indeed.

STELLA.

Them's her very words. Well, right away I say to myself, "Somethin's got to be done, or poor ole Jimmy is goin' to be eased off the payroll." So I ups and says to Miz' Marshall, "Give him the gate if you want to, but remember this: Where he goes, I go. Me and him is buddies."

HARVEY.

(*In consternation.*)

You said that to my—to Mrs. Marshall?

STELLA.

Them's my very words.

HARVEY.

What did she say?

STELLA.

Nothin'. Seemed kinda su'prised. Gimme the crumb brush. (*She puts tray full of dishes on*

buffet. HARVEY *hands her crumb brush and pan.* STELLA *sweeps crumbs from table. Puts pan on tray and brush on buffet.*) Now gimme a hand to fold the tablecloth. (STELLA *takes one end of the tablecloth.* HARVEY *takes the other, and they walk down in front of table, the length of the cloth between them.*)

HARVEY.

What do I do now?

STELLA.

Take it by the corners and spread it out wide, like this. (STELLA *takes corner of tablecloth in each hand, then opens her arms to the fullest extent.* HARVEY *does the same.*) Now come up close. (*They move toward each other, with arms still extended. They stand quite close together for a moment.* STELLA *raises her face toward* HARVEY'S.)

HARVEY.

Now what do I do?

STELLA.

(*Petulantly.*)

If you don't know, I ain't goin' to tell you. Gimme that cloth! (*Snatches tablecloth from him and folds it herself, holding middle of cloth in her teeth.*)

HARVEY.

I'm afraid that I am not much help. I don't know much about housework. (STELLA *mutters a vicious sentence, but, owing to the fact that her mouth is full of tablecloth, the words are inarticulate.*) What did you say?

STELLA.

I said there was a lot of things that you don't know much about. (*She finishes folding the cloth.*)

HARVEY.

You are quite right. (*Turns away and sits at right. He looks rather dejected.* · STELLA *puts folded cloth in buffet drawer. She turns and looks at* HARVEY.)

STELLA.

Well, never mind, ole timer, you can learn. And anyways, you gotta cheer up 'cause we're goin' to have a party. I held out the best parts of the chicken, and there's slathers of that gooey stuff that they had for dessert. Come on, Jimmy; bring the tray. (*Goes over to him.*) And don't you worry about bein' fired. If they gives you the air, we'll both get a job in a café. Come on!

(HARVEY *rises. There is a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a terrific peal of thunder—heralds of a sudden summer storm.* STELLA *screams and hurls herself on* HARVEY, *wildly throwing her arms about his neck. The unexpected attack throws* HARVEY *off his balance; he takes a step backward to recover it; the chair strikes him behind the knee and he sits violently on it.* STELLA *goes with him, still clinging to his neck. Intentional or not, they are now a picture of two sweethearts in a wild embrace.*)

HARVEY.

(*After a bewildered pause.*)

What happened?

STELLA.

It was lightnin'! And I'm scared to death of lightnin' when there's a man around.

HARVEY.

When there's a man around?

STELLA.

I mean when there ain't a man around. But you will protect me; won't you, James?

HARVEY.

I'll try. If you will—er—release me. I'll get up and see what can be done about it. (*Makes an attempt to rise.*)

STELLA.

No, don't move. I feel much safer this way. (*Telephone bell rings.* STELLA *takes arms from about* HARVEY'S *neck and sits up.*) Darn that 'foam, anyways! (*Fixes her hair. Phone continues to ring.*) Oh, ring your head off! (*Gets up from* HARVEY'S *knee and goes to phone.* HARVEY, *in evident relief, rises.* STELLA *takes off receiver and speaks into mouthpiece snappishly.*) Hello! (*Pauses.*) No, I ain't Mr. Marshall. I'm his father! Howja get that way? Can't you tell a lady when you hear one? (*Pauses.*) Whosit speakin'? (*Pauses.*) Yeh? Well, that don't give you no privileges to get fresh with me.

HARVEY.

(*Going to* STELLA.)

You had better let me have it.

STELLA.

(*To* HARVEY.)

G'wan away! I ain't no highbrow, and mebbe I don't know so much about machinery; but I can talk over a 'foam.

Enter JERRY *hurriedly by right door.*

JERRY.

What is it, Stella?

STELLA.

Police sergeant wants to speak to you. (HARVEY *goes up to buffet.*)

JERRY.

What can the police sergeant want to speak to me about? (*Crosses to phone.*)

STELLA.

(*Giving him the receiver.*)

Can't say, sir; I don't know what you been doin'. (*Winks broadly at* HARVEY.) Bring the tray, James. (*Exit by kitchen door.*)

(HARVEY *picks up tray and follows her.*)

JERRY.

(*In phone.*)

Hello! Yes. (*Pauses.*) Yes, we have a butler. James something-or-other. I don't know his last name. (*Pauses.*) Who? (*Pauses.*) Limpy Lannigan? Are you certain about this?

AUNT EMMY *enters at right, carrying several documents.*

JERRY.

I see. What's her name? (*Pauses.*) Slippery Sal? (*Pauses.*) Oh, Slippy Sal! (*Pauses.*) Why don't you arrest him? (*Pauses.*) I see. Well, thanks for the warning. I'll call you if anything happens. Good night! (*Hangs up receiver.*)

AUNT EMMY.

Here are the deeds, and here are the transfers. (*Puts documents on right end of table.*)

JERRY.

What do you think of this? Sergeant of police just called me up and told me to look out for the man who is acting as butler here. Says he is a well-known crook, Limpy Lannigan.

AUNT EMMY.

I knew that there was something the matter with that man the moment I set my eyes on him. He's no more a butler than I am.

JERRY.

Yes. I thought there was something wrong about him, myself. He has a bad eye. I caught him looking at me several times this evening as if he would like to murder me.

AUNT EMMY.

How did the police know that he was here?

JERRY.

A detective saw him at an employment bureau, and he imagined that Limpy was up to one of his old games. It seems that this man's specialty is taking a position as a man-servant in some private house. Once inside, he grabs the silverware and valuables, and with the aid of his—er—wife, Slippy Sal, he—

AUNT EMMY.

His wife? Is he married?

JERRY.

No, not exactly married; but they have a tacit understanding.

AUNT EMMY.

This will frighten Mary to death when she hears of it. I'll go and tell her at once.

JERRY.

I wouldn't. It can't do any good, and she might be of a nervous temperament.

AUNT EMMY.

Might be? Don't you know whether she has a nervous temperament or not, after living with her for five years?

JERRY.

I meant to say, she has a nervous temperament.

AUNT EMMY.

What are you going to do about this Limpy Lannigan?

JERRY.

What can I do?

(*Rain effect from here till curtain. It should be very quiet, so as not to interfere with the dialogue.*)

AUNT EMMY.

The least you can do is to discharge him. Get him out of the house. Do you want us all to be murdered?

JERRY.

There is no fear of that, now that we know about him. The sergeant said that the officer on this beat would keep an eye on the house. Besides I wouldn't want to do anything so drastic without Mrs. Marshall's consent.

AUNT EMMY.

Do you mean to say that you haven't the spunk to act for yourself in a matter of this kind? Are you master in this house, or aren't you? The hiring and firing of servants is a man's prerogative. If you don't want to do it, I'll do it myself. (*Starts toward left.*)

JERRY.

No. If you think it ought to be done I'll do it. (*Goes up to kitchen door.* AUNT EMMY *goes down right.*) James! I wish to speak to you. (*Comes down center. To* AUNT EMMY.) Perhaps you had better go. He may get violent.

AUNT EMMY.

I am going to stay right here. I was born and bred in Boggs' Corners, and it won't be the first time I've seen a man get violent.

Enter HARVEY *at kitchen door.*

HARVEY.

You wished to speak to me, sir?

JERRY.

Drop that butler business. We're on to you.

HARVEY.

(*Surprised.*)

You are?

JERRY.

Yes, we are. You are no more a butler than I am.

HARVEY.

(*Wearily.*)

Oh, well, I knew that I could never get away with

it. I told them that it wasn't any use. (*Sits at left.*) How did you find it out?

JERRY.

Never mind; we *did* find it out. We also found out about your—er—wife.

AUNT EMMY.
(*With contempt.*)

Wife! Huh!

HARVEY.
(*Curtly.*)

Just a minute! I want you people to understand that my wife had nothing to do with this. It was my plan—

JERRY.

And it was a pretty good plan, but we are a little too smart for you, Mr. Lannigan.

HARVEY.
(*Puzzled.*)

Mister who?

JERRY.

You heard me. I said Lannigan. Limpy Lannigan is your name, and there is no use of your denying it.

HARVEY.

I'm not denying it.

JERRY.

We've got your record. One stretch in Sing Sing and two in Atlanta. We also know about Slippy Sal.

HARVEY.
(*Fishing for a clue.*)

Oh, you know about Sal, too? Where did you get these—er—facts?

JERRY.

From the police.

HARVEY.

Well, what are you going to do about it?

JERRY.

I ought to hand you over to a cop.

HARVEY.

On what charge?

JERRY.

Burglary.

HARVEY.

You can't do it. I didn't break into this house, and I haven't taken anything out of it.

JERRY.

I said that I ought to hand you over, but I won't. I'll simply discharge you. Take your hat and get out.

HARVEY.

Now? To-night?

JERRY.

Certainly.

HARVEY.

I can't possibly do that. It's raining. And I'm subject to colds in the head.

AUNT EMMY.

I never heard such impudence in all my life.

JERRY.

Will you go, or will I have to phone for the police?

HARVEY.

(*Rising.*)

Let's be reasonable about this, Mr.— What's your name, anyway?

JERRY.

My name is Marshall—Harvey P. Marshall.

HARVEY.

Of course. Harvey P. Marshall. I forgot, for the moment. Now, Mr. Marshall, I appeal to your sense of fairness. I took this job of butler in good faith. I have done my best to give you service. I have worked hard, and I need my rest. Let us all get a good sleep to-night, and in the morning—

AUNT EMMY.

(*Jumping up.*)

Good sleep! Do you suppose any of us can go to sleep while you are in the house? (*To* JERRY.) Harvey Marshall, I will not stay another minute under the same roof with this criminal.

Enter MARY, *right. She comes slowly to center, looking from one person to the other. She wears a rather scared expression.*

MARY.

What is it? What has happened?

JERRY.

Nothing of importance, Mary. I have just discharged the butler.

MARY.

Discharged! James! You can't do that.

AUNT EMMY.

(*Reprovingly.*)

Now, Mary!

MARY.

But, aunty, he can't discharge James. James has a steady job here. I mean a permanent position.

JERRY.

The hiring and firing of servants is the husband's prerogative. Don't interfere, please.

MARY.

I will interfere. I will not let you send James out on a night like this. There are good reasons why he should remain here.

AUNT EMMY.

There are better reasons why he should not remain here. Mary, we know more about this man than you do. His name is not James. (MARY *looks startled.*) His name is Limpy. (MARY *looks relieved, but puzzled.*) He is a notorious yeggman.

MARY.

What's a yeggman?

AUNT EMMY.

I don't know.

JERRY.

I know that he has served a term in prison, and

I say that he is going to get out of this house to-night.

MARY.

And I say that he is not.

JERRY.

I am the master of this house. (*To* HARVEY.) Go!

HARVEY.

No. I will not leave this place till I get my wages.

JERRY.

Hey?

HARVEY.

You heard me. You are firing me without notice, and I demand a month's salary. Butlers have their rights. You owe me sixty dollars.

JERRY.

Mary, you had better pay this man and save all argument.

MARY.

(*Sulkily.*)

Pay him yourself. You're master of the house.

JERRY.

(*Hedging.*)

Well, perhaps after all we had better postpone this business till the morning. Things may look differently after a good night's sleep.

AUNT EMMY.

Harvey Marshall! Pay this man at once, and send him away!

JERRY.
(*Gloomily.*)

All right. But I hate to waste good money on him. (*Takes bills from pocket, counts them, and hands them to* HARVEY.) Now beat it. And if you ever show your face around here again, I'll have you sent up for life.

(HARVEY *pockets money and turns to left, as if to exit.*)

MARY.

Stop! I will not let you drive him out into the rain. He is subject to colds. He has been that way ever since I knew him. If he gets his feet wet, they go to his head.

JERRY.
(*Laying his hand on* MARY'S *arm and speaking firmly.*)

My dear wife, you are getting hysterical. You had better retire.

MARY.
(*Fiercely shaking his hand away.*)

I am not getting hysterical, and I will not retire. And if you call me your dear wife once more, I'll—I'll hit you with something.

JERRY.
(*Rising to the occasion and speaking loudly and sternly.*)

Madam, you go too far! I have stood all of this that I intend to stand! You presume upon my good nature. I have always been a good husband to you, loving and gentle, but I want you to understand once and for all that you are not married to a

"yessir." No woman that ever lived can henpeck me. You have been making yourself ridiculous. Go to bed at once! (*He points right with a dramatic forefinger, holding the pose.*)

(MARY'S *face is a study of varied emotions—consternation, indignation, and suppressed fury. She stands looking at* JERRY *as if about to speak, then turns and rapidly goes out at right.*)

HARVEY

(*Taking a step forward.*)

Just a minute—

(JERRY, *without changing the position of his body, reverses his gesture. Dropping his right arm and raising his left, he points to front door.*)

JERRY.

Out! (HARVEY *looks at him, shrugs shoulders, and goes out at left.*) I am sorry that you had to witness this scene, Aunt Emmy. Mary is usually an obedient wife, but there are times when I have to assert myself. The iron hand in the velvet glove, you know.

AUNT EMMY.

I thought that the lovey-dovey **kissing** business was too good to last.

JERRY.

Some people think that married life is a taffy boat, sailing on a sea of syrup. But believe me it is far otherwise—far otherwise. And now let us look over the deeds.

(*They both turn toward table.*)

CURTAIN

NOTE: *The curtain remains down a few seconds only, to denote the lapse of two hours. During the interval the theater should remain dark.*

Scene Two

SCENE: *Same as in Act I. It is the same night, two hours later than Scene I. All lights are out, with the exception of a bright floor lamp with a red shade at right, and a moonlight effect, back of window.*

At rise of curtain, HARVEY *is discovered seated in armchair near lamp. He is smoking a cigar and reading a newspaper. After a pause,* SYLVIA *appears outside of window. She peers in, then taps on glass.* HARVEY *looks around, sees her, puts down newspaper and goes to window, which he opens.*

HARVEY.

Oh, it's Mrs. Allen! Won't you come in?

SYLVIA.

Thank you. (*Allows* HARVEY *to help her in through window.*) I waited till I saw the lights turned off. Is everyone asleep?

HARVEY.

No. Mary is in talking to her cousin, I believe. Won't you sit down?

(SYLVIA *sits in chair recently occupied by* HARVEY. HARVEY *pulls chair from left end of table and sits also. They should both be in the light from the floor lamp.*)

SYLVIA.

The long-distance call was from Tom. He's in

Chester. The hotel deal fell through. A firm from Philadelphia got it.

HARVEY.

I'm sorry.

SYLVIA.

Yes, it's too bad. Tom was so certain of it. He is driving home to-night, although he says that it is raining there, and that the roads are terrible. He's had three blow-outs, and there is something the matter with the ignition. On top of all that trouble with the car, he's got one of his attacks of indigestion. Mr. Marshall, Tom is a good husband—none better; but he is only human. Losing that contract and getting one of his attacks is going to put him in a condition where he has to be humored.

HARVEY.

Naturally.

SYLVIA.

Our house is a wreck. With all of these things gone (*indicates curtains and silver*), it looks as if a cyclone had struck it. When Tom sees it, he is going to go straight up in the air.

HARVEY.

(*Rising hastily.*)

Don't say another word, Mrs. Allen. I understand perfectly. It was kind of you to let Mary have the curtains and things, and neither one of us would have you placed in an embarrassing position for the world. What time will Tom get here?

SYLVIA.

About one o'clock.

HARVEY.

What time is it now?

SYLVIA.

(*Looking at clock and smiling.*)

It's still a quarter to seven by **your** clock. It must be nearly eleven by the right time.

HARVEY.

I will have everything back in your house, and in place, by twelve.

SYLVIA.

That is very nice of you, Mr. Marshall. But how will you explain things to your Aunt Emmy?

HARVEY.

Mary will explain them. Mary can explain everything.

SYLVIA.

(*Rising.*)

I'll help you pack the things. (*Gets traveling bag from floor at left of buffet and places it on table.*)

HARVEY.

You pick out your silver, and I'll pack it away. (*Goes to left of table.*)

SYLVIA.

All right. (*Goes to buffet.*) Can't we have a little more light?

HARVEY.

I'm afraid not. And we'll have to work very quietly. I am not supposed to be here at all. I've been discharged.

SYLVIA.

Who discharged you?

HARVEY.

Mary's other husband. Who is he, anyway?

SYLVIA.

(*Taking articles from buffet and handing them to* HARVEY.)

I'm not sure whether he's a Mr. Muncey from Niles, Michigan, or a Mr. Niles from Muncie, Indiana. He is a friend of my brother. Don't you think that he played the part splendidly?

HARVEY.

I think that he rather overplayed it. It seems to me that there was an unnecessary amount of kissing.

SYLVIA.

I imagine it's his idea of the way that married people act.

HARVEY.

It's a funny idea.

SYLVIA.

What do you mean by saying that he discharged you? What happened after I left? He was very agreeable at dinner.

HARVEY.

Too agreeable. No husband could be as agreeable as he was. It's against human nature. But right after dinner, he appeared to get rabid—wild. He must have eaten something that didn't agree with him.

SYLVIA.

The dessert was awfully rich.

HARVEY.

He called me in here, said that I was a notorious crook, and fired me. Mary tried to interfere. He told her to shut up and go to bed.

SYLVIA.

(*Astonished.*)

He told Mary that! What did she say?

HARVEY.

Nothing. She just looked at him a minute and then flew out of the room.

SYLVIA.

What did you do?

HARVEY.

Put on my coat, stood in the rain, and laughed.

SYLVIA.

It must have been funny. I don't think that I ever heard you laugh, Mr. Marshall.

HARVEY.

I don't laugh easily. I take my humor seriously. But the look on Mary's face, when that man told her to shut up and go to bed, would have made a horse laugh.

SYLVIA.

And no one knows that you are in the house?

HARVEY.

No one except Mary. I went round to the kitchen door, and she let me in. Is that all? (*Takes last article from* SYLVIA *and puts it in bag.*)

SYLVIA.

There are some knives and things, but never mind them now. Let's get the curtains next. (*Goes to right.*) I'll take them down. You get the basket. Mary put it in the little room at the end of the hall.

HARVEY.

All right. (*Places a chair at arch on right for* SYLVIA *and goes out by hall door.*)

(SYLVIA *climbs on chair and takes down curtains.* LANNIGAN'S *face appears in the moonlight at window.* SYLVIA *gets down from chair. Face disappears from window.* SYLVIA *carries chair to window, climbs on it, and takes down curtains.*)

HARVEY *enters, down left, with large clothes basket used in first act. He puts it at right of chair on which* SYLVIA *is standing.*

HARVEY.

This it?

SYLVIA.

(*Dropping curtains into basket.*)

Yes. (*She gets down from chair.*)

HARVEY.

There is something in the basket now.

SYLVIA.

Yes, it's the bed linen I brought over. Mary didn't need it. If you will hand me the basket, I will run over to the house. You can bring the bag. (*She steps out of window.*)

(HARVEY *hands her the clothes basket.*)

HARVEY.

I'll be with you as soon as I get the rest of the silver.

SYLVIA.

(*Off center.*)

All right.

JERRY *appears in arch at right. He is dressed in shirt and trousers. He hears* SYLVIA *but is not in time to see her. As* HARVEY *turns away from window,* JERRY *steps out of the moonlight. He apparently goes out at right.* HARVEY *goes over to buffet and rummages through the drawers until he finds the knives.* LANNIGAN'S *face again appears at window.* HARVEY *puts the knives in traveling bag, closes bag, and turns toward the window.* LANNIGAN'S *face disappears again.* HARVEY *is about to exit by window when* JERRY *re-enters at right. He is holding something that glitters in the moonlight. He points it at* HARVEY.

JERRY.

Put 'em up!

HARVEY.

(*Turns quickly and sees* JERRY. *Throws the bag out of the window and puts up his hands.*)

Don't shoot!

JERRY.

(*With hand at light button on wall at right. All lights up.* JERRY *slips the scissors, which he has been pointing at* HARVEY, *into his pocket. His hand remains in his pocket.*)

I've got you covered. Move away from that win-

dow. (HARVEY *goes to right, while* JERRY *moves up to window. They are both watching each other intently, and fail to see* LANNIGAN, *who appears at window, picks up bag, and vanishes into the darkness.*) Tried to slip the silver to your lady friend, eh? Well, it won't work this time. (*He looks out of window.*) By gum! It did work. The bag is gone. (*Comes down to table.*) Well, we've got you, anyway. We'll get Slippy Sal later.

HARVEY.

Listen, old man, you are making a mistake. I wasn't stealing anything. If you will let me speak to my wife a moment, she will explain everything.

JERRY.

Yes? I suppose that you want me to sit here while you go out and speak to Slippy Sal.

HARVEY.

I didn't mean—er—Slippy Sal; I meant Mrs. Marshall.

JERRY.

My wife? You've got a fine chance to speak to my wife. I suppose that you want to play on her sympathy again. It won't do, Lannigan. Can't you think of anything else?

HARVEY.

I can't think of anything else with my hands in this position.

JERRY.

Well, I can. Give me my sixty dollars.

HARVEY.

I can't give it to you while I have my hands up.

JERRY.

You can put one hand down. But remember if you try any monkey business, you're a dead man. (HARVEY *takes bills from pocket with right hand. He still holds left hand up.*) Put it on the table! (HARVEY *comes forward and puts money on table, then puts right hand up again.*)

HARVEY.

If you will give me your attention for a few minutes, I can clear this matter up.

JERRY.

Go ahead.

HARVEY.

May I sit down?

JERRY.

Yes.

HARVEY.

(*Sitting at the left end of table.*)

Here is the whole thing in a nutshell. This mixed-up business started out as a sort of joke.

JERRY.

You'll find it is an expensive sort of a joke.

HARVEY.

To begin with, I am not a butler.

JERRY.

I know it. You're a crook.

HARVEY.

No, I am not a crook. But I can't explain this thing if you keep on interrupting.

AUNT EMMY *appears at arch, right. She is wearing a kimono of vivid color.*

AUNT EMMY.
(*Excitedly.*)

I knew it! I knew that man was in the house again. I couldn't sleep. (*Looks around.*) Where are the curtains? Where is the silver?

JERRY.

This fellow has cleaned out the house. I caught him in the act.

AUNT EMMY.

I never heard of such a barefaced robbery in my life. Why is he holding his hands like that? Is he praying?

JERRY.

No. You may put them down, Lannigan. Please be seated, aunty. Lannigan is about to explain everything. Go ahead, Limpy.

HARVEY.
(*Wearily.*)

I have changed my mind. I have nothing to say.

JERRY.

That's what I thought. Get the police station on the phone, aunty.

HARVEY.
(*Startled.*)

The police station?

AUNT EMMY.
(*Going to left to phone.*)

What is the number?

JERRY.

I don't know. Ask information. There is a station in the next block, at Cogswell Avenue.

(AUNT EMMY *takes off receiver.*)

AUNT EMMY.

(*Speaking into mouthpiece.*)

Information, please.

HARVEY.

(*To* JERRY, *in a low tone.*)

Let us go somewhere where we can be private.

JERRY.

You're going somewhere where you can be private.

AUNT EMMY.

(*In phone.*)

What is the number of the Cogswell Avenue Police Station. Chadwick 07? Thank you. Give me Chadwick 07. (*Pauses. To* JERRY.) What shall I say?

JERRY.

Say that we have caught Limpy Lannigan with the goods and tell them to send an officer here.

AUNT EMMY.

(*Speaking into mouthpiece.*)

This the police station? This is Miss Paisley, 3545 Spruce Avenue. Send an officer here at once. We have caught Limpy Lannigan with the goods. (*Pauses.*) Thank you. (*Rises.*) He is sending a policeman over, right away.

MARY *enters at right, her arms full of blankets, sheets, and pillows. She looks at the three people in the room and sees that something is wrong.*

MARY.
(*Wearily.*)

Well, what's the matter now? (*Throws bed linen on chair right and looks around.*) Why, where's the silver?

HARVEY.

The silver is all right. It is in a safe place. Don't talk.

AUNT EMMY.

It's in a safe place all right. Now, Mary, perhaps you will pay a little more attention to the advice of your elders. This—yeggman has stolen your silver.

MARY.

Gracious, aunty! Do we have to go all over that again. I don't know what a yeggman is, but I do know that James isn't one.

AUNT EMMY.

Won't you even believe your own eyes? Your silver is gone, and this man took it. Your husband caught him with the goods.

MARY.

If James took the silver, it is safe. (*To* HARVEY.) Where is it, James?

HARVEY.

I gave it to Mrs. Allen.

AUNT EMMY.

Why should he give your silver to Mrs. Allen?

HARVEY.

She asked me to.

AUNT EMMY.

I don't believe it. Why should Mrs. Allen ask for your silver in the middle of the night?

HARVEY.

She wanted her husband to see it.

AUNT EMMY.

I never heard such nonsense in all my life. This man claims that, after he has been discharged, he comes back, breaks into the house, collects the silver, and gives it to the woman next door. And why? Simply because the woman wants her husband to see it. Mary, do you believe that?

MARY.

(*Stoutly.*)

I do.

AUNT EMMY.

Then there is no hope for you. (*Turns away, left.*)

JERRY.

We can settle that part of it very easily. (*Goes to left.*) What is Mrs. Allen's phone number?

MARY.

Chadwick 4202.

JERRY.

(*At phone.*)

Chadwick 4202. (*Pauses.*) This you, Mrs. Allen? I have a rather peculiar question to ask you. Some of our silver is missing. James, the butler, says that he lent it to you. Is he telling the truth? (*Pauses.*) Thank you. (*Hangs up receiver and rises.*) She says James is mistaken. She hasn't got it.

HARVEY.
(*Looks at* MARY *in alarm.*)

I put the bag out of the window. (*To* JERRY.) Are you sure that it isn't there now?

JERRY.

I am.

HARVEY.

Then she must have taken it. There was no one else there.

JERRY.

Yes, there was. Your wife was there.

MARY.

His wife?

JERRY.

Slippy Sal.

MARY.

What in the world are you talking about?

AUNT EMMY.

This man has a female confederate.

JERRY.

She was here to-night; in this room.

MARY.

You saw her?

JERRY.

No, I didn't see her. They had the lights turned out. But I heard them talking.

MARY.

This is getting worse every minute. (*Sinks into pile of bedclothes on chair.*)

(*Doorbell rings, off left.*)

JERRY.

(*Nodding significantly to* AUNT EMMY.)

You go, Aunt Emmy.

(*Exit* AUNT EMMY *by hall door.* MARY *has a feeling that something is wrong. She rises and looks at each of the men in turn.*)

MARY.

(*With growing alarm.*)

What is it? Who is at the door?

JERRY.

(*Coming back of table, center.*)

It is a police officer.

MARY.

You don't mean to say that you are going to send—James—to jail?

JERRY.

Of course.

MARY.

Oh, no! You must not. (*Runs across to* HARVEY.) I'll tell everything!

HARVEY.

Hush! It will be all right if you will only keep quiet.

AUNT EMMY *and* OFFICER SHEA *enter hall door, left.* SHEA *is in uniform. He does not remove his hat.*

AUNT EMMY.

(*Making vague gesture in the general direction of the two men.*)

There he is.

SHEA.

I see he is. Sure I'd know Limpy annywhere be his photo in the rogues' gallery. Well, well, 'tis said you can't tache an old dog new tricks, nor break him of his old ones. (*During speech he goes up behind* HARVEY'S *chair, but continues on till he has reached* JERRY. *He lays his hand on* JERRY'S *arm.*) Come on, Lannigan!

(*The mistake is a natural one.* HARVEY *is seated at the table in neat evening clothes.* JERRY *is standing almost in line with* HARVEY *and is in trousers and shirt.* MARY *has her hand on* HARVEY'S *shoulder.* SHEA'S *claim that he recognizes* LANNIGAN *is, of course, the usual bunk.*)

JERRY.

(*Startled.*)

Hey!

SHEA.

Come on, me lad. We're going to take a nice ride in the wagon.

JERRY.

(*Shaking* SHEA'S *hand off.*)

Let go of me. I'm not Lannigan.

SHEA.

Aisy, now. You'd better come along quietly. Don't start annythin'.

AUNT EMMY.

Officer, you have the wrong man. That is Mr.

Marshall. This is the criminal. (*Points to* HARVEY.)

SHEA.
(*To* JERRY.)

I beg your pardon, sir. My mistake. But these days the crooks does be lookin' so much like gintlemin, and the gintlemin does be lookin'— Well, well, there's no offince mint, and I hope there'll be none took.

JERRY.
(*Sulkily.*)

It's all right. There's your man. (*Points to* HARVEY.)

SHEA.
(*To* HARVEY.)

Come on, Limpy. (*Puts hand on* HARVEY'S *shoulder.*)

MARY.

No! This man hasn't done anything wrong, and you are not going to arrest him.

SHEA.

Who are you?

MARY.

I am Mrs. Marshall. This is my house.

JERRY.

Officer, my dear wife is rather excited—

MARY.

Will you stop calling me your dear wife?

JERRY.

Well, you are my dear wife; aren't you?

MARY.

Suppose I am. Do you have to make a song about it?

AUNT EMMY.

Mary, you are making yourself ridiculous. You are allowing your silly sympathy to carry you away. Stop thinking of him and think of your beautiful wedding presents.

MARY.

If he has taken my wedding presents, it is my affair and doesn't concern anyone else.

SHEA.

You're wrong there, ma'am. It concerns the law. If he has committed a crime he rinders himself liable, whether you make a complaint or not. 'Tis all right to be kind-hearted, but this man is an old offender. He's a jailbird, a crook. He's one of the best known yeggmen in—

MARY.

He is not. He isn't a jailbird! He isn't a crook! He isn't a yeggman. He isn't anything. He's my husband.

AUNT EMMY.

Mary!

(JERRY *looks startled.* HARVEY *looks disgusted, and* SHEA *looks puzzled.*)

SHEA.

'Twas only a moment ago you said the other lad was your husband.

MARY.

I know, but I'm going to tell the truth now. He

isn't my husband, he's a kind of a joke—I mean, *it's* a kind of a joke. He's my step-husband!

SHEA.

Well, lady, I wisht you'd make up your mind.

AUNT EMMY.

Mary, this is outrageous! (*To* SHEA.) Pay no attention to her. She is hysterical. She has been subject to what I call romantic attacks ever since she was a child. I thought that she would outgrow them, but I see that she hasn't done so. She is always imagining dramatic situations. Everything has to be like a play on the stage. I know more about her than she does herself.

SHEA.

That may well be, ma'am; but who's her husband ought to be one thing she knows better than you. Now one of these lads is the lady's husband. The other is Limpy Lannigan, and the one that's Limpy Lannigan is going to the station with me. Spake up now. Which is which?

MARY.

Ask them.

SHEA.

I will. (*To* JERRY.) Are you the lady's husband?

JERRY.

(*Uneasily standing between the lie and the jail, hesitates, then makes the choice.*)

I am.

MARY.

He isn't. I tell you—

SHEA.
(*To* HARVEY.)
What have you to say, me lad?

HARVEY.
I have nothing to say. I took the silver. Let's get out of this.

MARY.
I can explain why he took it. He—

HARVEY.
I can do my own explaining. Please don't say any more.

MARY.
(*Turning on* JERRY.)
This is all your fault! Right from the start you have bungled everything. I wish that I had never seen you.

During the above speech, FLORENCE *enters at right. She also wears negligeé.*

JERRY.
(*Trying to placate* MARY.)
My dear wife—

FLORENCE.
What is it, aunty—all this loud talking? I couldn't sleep. (*At the sound of her voice,* JERRY *turns sharply toward her and for the first time, she sees his face.*) Jerry! (*She stares in horror at* JERRY.)

JERRY.
(*Astounded.*)
Flossie! What in heaven's name are you doing

here? (*Goes toward her with outstretched arms.*) This is great!

FLORENCE.
(*Shrinking back.*)

Keep away. Don't touch me! Why are you here? Why did you call Mary your wife?

JERRY.

I can explain that. She isn't my wife really. It's a kind of a joke.

AUNT EMMY.
(*Crossing to right center.*)

Florence, who is this man?

FLORENCE.

He is Gerald W. Niles, M.D.—the man to whom I am engaged to be married.

AUNT EMMY.

He is not Gerald W. Niles, M. D. He is Harvey P. Marshall, butter and eggs, and you can't be engaged to him because he is already married to Mary.

FLORENCE.
(*Burying her face in her hands.*)

Oh, oh!

JERRY.

Hold on, now! Be calm, everybody. This can easily be explained. It's all a mistake. I am not married.

FLORENCE.

You are married. I heard you quarrelling. Why should you two be quarrelling if you are not married?

JERRY.

It is no use arguing about it. Here is Mrs. Marshall; she can settle it. (*To* MARY.) My dear wife —I mean, my dear Mrs. Marshall, I want you to clear up this matter. Are we married?

MARY.
(*Vindictively.*)

Yes.

JERRY.

Hey!

MARY.

I wanted to explain, but you wouldn't let me. Now you can do your own explaining. (*Goes to arch, right.*)

JERRY.
(*Excitedly.*)

Flossie, it isn't true. She is doing that on purpose. It's all a joke, I tell you. I never knew her till to-day. I—I was just acting as her step-husband.

MARY.

Pay no attention to him. He's hysterical. (*Exit by arch, right.*)

AUNT EMMY.

The whole thing is plain to me now. It's grandpa's property. This man is bound that he will have it, if he has to marry everyone in the family.

JERRY.

Nonsense! What do I care for the property or for who gets it? It's nothing to me.

AUNT EMMY.

Then why did you spend an hour this very night trying to convince me not to give Florence any of the property, but to leave it all to your child?

FLORENCE.

Child! Is there a child? Oh, this is terrible! (*Pulls ring from finger and holds it out to* JERRY.) Take your ring. I never want to see you again.

JERRY.

If you will only listen a minute—

FLORENCE.

Good-bye. (*Drops ring on floor. Exit, right.*)

JERRY.

Wait a minute. (*Picks up ring and hurries to door after* FLORENCE. *Turns to* AUNT EMMY.) Aunt Emmy, will you listen to me?

AUNT EMMY.

(*Coldly.*)

No. And don't call me Aunt Emmy. (*Exit, right.*)

(JERRY *stands staring at the remaining occupants with unseeing eyes; then turns and dashes off right.*)

HARVEY.

(*Smiles.*)

It's hard to explain anything to anyone, when the one you are explaining it to won't listen.

SHEA.

Lannigan, in me time I've had to go into manny a house, take out some bird that was kookoo, and

put him away in the nut factory, especially since wood alcohol became the national biveridge. But I'll say this much: Niver was I in a house before where they were all kookoo.

HARVEY.

It's a queer world.

SHEA.

It is. (*Goes to buffet, picks up box of cigars and turns to* HARVEY.) Have a cigar.

HARVEY.

Thanks. (*Takes a cigar from box.*)

SHEA.

Take a couple. (HARVEY *takes another.*) Yes, sir, it's a queer world. Nobody is ever satisfied or contint with what they have. They must always be reachin' out for other people's property. (*Unbuttons coat and puts handful of cigars in pocket.*) Take, for instance, you, Lannigan. You're not contint with what you have. You can't kape your hands off others' property. (*Takes another handful of cigars.*) You must be always st'alin'. Not that I'm complainin'. If it wasn't for the likes of you, the likes of me would be out of a job.

HARVEY.

I understand.

(*Murmur of women's voices, off left.* JERRY's *voice joins in. The word "explain" is prominent.*)

SHEA.

Then there's the other lad. He's not contint. He has a fine wife and a fine home, but 'tis not enough. He must be chasin' after Flossie. Well, well, 'tis

nothin' to us. Let's be goin', Limpy. We'll not bother about the wagon. (*Goes to door at left.*) 'Tis only a short ways, and the walk will do you good. (HARVEY *rises.*) After you, Lannigan. (*Opens hall door and stands to one side.*)

HARVEY.
(*At hall door.*)

I suppose it wouldn't be any use my telling you that you have made a mistake; that I am not Lannigan.

SHEA.

None whativer, me lad. None whativer.

HARVEY.

That's what I thought. (*Exit by hall door.*)

(SHEA *follows him, closing the door. The murmur of voices off right grows stronger, but the only words which can be distinguished are* JERRY'S "*listen*" *and* "*explain.*")

CURTAIN

HER STEP-HUSBAND

Third Act

Scene: *Same as Act II. It is ten minutes later.*

At rise of curtain, Mary *and* Jerry, *are discovered.* Mary *is seated at left of table. She is writing.* Jerry *is pacing back and forth from left to right in front of table. He has a dejected look. After* Jerry *has crossed the stage several times,* Mary *looks up.*

Mary.

If you've just got to pace up and down like a lion in a zoo, or something, I wish you'd do it in another room. I'm trying to concentrate.

(Jerry *stops at the right end of his beat and, turning, glares at her.*)

Jerry.

What I can't understand is, why you deliberately said that we were married, when I wanted you to tell the truth.

Mary.

You said the same thing not a minute before, when I wanted you to tell the truth.

Jerry.

I was forced to. I didn't want to be taken to jail.

MARY.

My husband didn't want to go to jail either, but he had to go.

JERRY.

Do you mean to say that this crook is really your husband?

MARY.

He isn't a crook.

JERRY.

Butler.

MARY.

He isn't a butler.

JERRY.

(*Resuming his pacing.*)

Well, I don't care what he is. I've got troubles of my own.

MARY.

You're going to have more trouble, if you don't get my husband out of jail.

JERRY.

I can't get him out of jail. Besides, I am not going to leave this house until I've seen Florence. She has locked herself in her room and won't answer me when I call to her. But she can't stay there forever. She's got to come out sometime; and when she does, I'm going to be right here to meet her.

MARY.

It won't do any good. She won't listen to you.

JERRY.

She'll listen to you. You've got to help me out of this.

MARY.

I'll help you out of this when you help my husband out of jail.

JERRY.

You promised me that you would tell her the truth about it. Are you trying to back out? (*Sits at right.*)

MARY.

No, I'll tell her the truth. I'll tell her the whole truth. But if you imagine that the truth is going to help you, you are mistaken. I'll tell her that I was only pretending that you were my husband, and I'll tell her how you rushed in and kissed Sylvia, then rushed over and kissed me, and how you kept on kissing me all evening.

JERRY.

You don't have to lean so heavily on the kissing. It didn't mean anything. It was only atmosphere; you know that.

MARY.

Yes, I know it; but try to get Florence to believe it.

JERRY.

(*After pause, petulantly.*)

I can't get this bird out of jail! It will take six lawyers and a writ of habeas corpus.

MARY.

(*Rising.*)

If you will take this list (*picks up paper from table*) and follow my instructions, you will have no trouble in setting Harvey free.

JERRY.
(*Rising.*)
Harvey? Is this man Harvey P. Marshall?

MARY.
Naturally; since he's my husband. Now I want you to look at this list. (*Holds paper so that* JERRY *can see it and points to the different items with a pencil.*) First, you are to go into a hardware store and buy a large file. Second, you are to go into a bakery and buy a large loaf of bread. Do you suppose that the police will let you give Harvey a loaf of bread in his cell?

JERRY.
(*Grudgingly.*)
I suppose that they would. But what's the idea? Is Harvey supposed to take the loaf of bread and eat himself out of jail?

MARY.
This is not a joke, Dr. Niles.

JERRY.
Well, if it isn't a joke, what is it? What's the bread for?

MARY.
You are to stick the file in the middle of the loaf so that Harvey can get it without the police's knowing. You must then go to a rope-ladder store and buy a rope ladder. Harvey will file away the bars in his cell window. You will get the rope ladder up to him somehow. He will climb down the ladder and escape. What do you think of it?

JERRY.
It's a great idea; but how would this do? I'll go

out and find some one to go his bail. It would save a lot of trouble. Do you know anyone who would go on his bond?

MARY.

Dr. Shultz, the druggist on the next corner, would. Harvey plays checkers with him.

JERRY.

All right, I'll see Dr. Shultz. (*Crosses to front door, left.*) If Florence comes out, you be sure and hold her till I get back.

MARY.

I will. And, remember: You are not to tell aunty about your not being my husband. I'll tell her myself.

(*Exit* JERRY, *left.* MARY *goes to chair at right, takes the bedclothing, and starts to make a bed on the dining table. There is a sound as if some one were tapping on the window.* MARY *listens. The tapping is repeated.* MARY *goes to window and opens it.*)

HARVEY *appears at window.*

MARY.

Oh, Harvey! How did you escape? Did you shoot the policeman?

HARVEY.

(*Climbing in at window.*)

Certainly not. I asked him to come into the drug store and get a glass of root beer. Then I had Dr. Shultz identify me. Where's that other man?

MARY.

He has gone down to the drug store to ask Dr. Shultz to bail you out. I suppose he will be right back when they tell him you're not in jail.

HARVEY.

He needn't hurry on my account. I don't like that fellow.

MARY.

I don't like him, either.

HARVEY.

No one would ever suspect it. Every time I came into the room, you and he were kissing.

MARY.

Oh, but Harvey, those kisses don't count! I had my fingers crossed. Besides, he's in love with Florence. He's in a terrible state about it. She's turned him down.

HARVEY.

I know. I was here when it happened. It was the one bright moment in a miserable evening. I shall never forget the way he looked when he saw Florence. (*Grins.*)

MARY.

Harvey dear, would you very much mind sleeping here on the dining-room table to-night?

HARVEY.

Well, it isn't exactly my idea of a comfortable place to sleep. What's the matter with my own bed?

MARY.

I had to give Dr. Niles our room. (*Finishes making bed on table.*)

HARVEY.

All right, I'll take the table. Now, Mary, I want you to sit down and listen to me. We have got to have a serious talk. (*Pulls out chair at right of table.* MARY *sits.*) You must tell your aunt the truth about this whole affair.

MARY.

I tried to tell her, but she wouldn't listen to me. None of you would listen to me.

HARVEY.

I believe in telling the truth at all times. But some times are better than others, and one of the worst times is when there is a policeman standing at your elbow.

MARY.

I am quite willing to tell aunty the truth. But I won't tell her the whole truth. I won't tell her that we deliberately tried to deceive her. She would never forgive us. I'll just tell her that you are my husband and let it go at that.

HARVEY.

You will have to tell her everything. If you don't, how are you going to account for this other man's being here and posing as me? That will be the first thing she will ask you.

MARY.

I could explain it this way. I could say that Stella isn't really a maid, but that she is Dora, Queen of the Underworld, and leader of a notorious gang of counterfeiters; and that Dr. Niles is a detective who disguises himself as my husband in order

to get into the house and secure the necessary evidence and—

HARVEY.

Oh, Mary, for heaven's sake, stop! Do you suppose that your aunt is going to believe that stuff?

MARY.

Why, Harvey, that is just the kind of stuff she will believe. It's the kind of stuff that everyone believes. She won't believe the truth. When I tried to tell her the truth, she said I was hysterical.

HARVEY.

But she knows that Niles is not a detective; and how are you going to explain my posing as the butler?

MARY.

I was just coming to that. Sylvia sees Dr. Niles, and she suspects that he is here for no good, and she tells you, and you disguise yourself as butler in order to shadow him and—

HARVEY.

(*Sternly.*)

Mary, this business has got to stop! This foolishness is getting to be a mania with you. I have put up with it, thinking that perhaps you would outgrow it in time. But you are getting worse and worse, and it is time that I put my foot down. Our married life has been just one damned scenario after another.

MARY.

(*Looks scared.*)

Why—why, Harvey, I didn't think that you felt

that way about it. I didn't mean any harm. I was just doing the best I could.

HARVEY.

The best you could to put me in some ridiculous situation. Look at the mess you have made of this affair!

MARY.

(*On the verge of tears.*)

I wanted Willie to get grandpa's money.

HARVEY.

That's it—money, property! Everything will be all right as long as we get it! It doesn't make any difference how we get it, how you have to scheme, or how many lies you have to tell—

MARY.

Lies?

HARVEY.

Yes, lies. That's just what they are. You can call them fancies or day dreams or whatever you like. But they are lies—just plain lies. I'd rather lose this property a hundred times over than to know that I have a mercenary wife.

MARY.

Mercenary! Harvey, you don't mean that.

HARVEY.

That's exactly what I do mean.

MARY.

(*Rising.*)

I think that you are forgetting some things, Harvey. Was I mercenary when I refused the shingle-

mill man and married you? Was I mercenary when we lived in two rooms and a bath—two little dark rooms that weren't fit for anything except developing photographs? I worked and slaved and scraped and saved, year in and year out, did the washing and the cooking and the scrubbing; made my own clothes and mended yours; did everything there was to be done and never complained and never asked you for a dollar that wasn't actually needed to keep the home going. And now you say that I am mercenary! (*She sits down, buries her face in the pillow that she has placed on the table, and sobs.*)

HARVEY.

(*Leaning over her.*)

Don't, Mary. Don't cry. I didn't mean what I said. Of course you are not mercenary, and no one could blame you if you were. I was a fool to say a thing like that. (*He tries to put his arm about her, but she shoves him away.*)

MARY.

(*Sobbing.*)

Go—go away! Go back to your Slip—Slip—Slippery Sal. (*Cries.*)

HARVEY.

Mary, you don't mean to tell me that you believe that rot? I don't know any Slippy Sal.

MARY.

You do, too. She was right in this room—in the dark!

HARVEY.

Don't you understand it yet? That was Mrs. Allen.

MARY.

(*Looking up from pillow in surprise.*)

Mrs. Allen? Sylvia?

HARVEY.

Yes. Tom phoned her that he was coming home, and she came over to get the things that she had lent you.

MARY.

(*Rising.*)

Oh, Harvey, how I have wronged you! Kiss me! (MARY *and* HARVEY *embrace and kiss.*)

Enter AUNT EMMY *through arch, right. She is dressed for the street, wearing coat and hat.*

AUNT EMMY.

Mary! (MARY *and* HARVEY *break away, then turn and look at* AUNT EMMY.) So this is why you did not want this man sent to jail.

MARY.

(*Alarmed.*)

Where are you going, aunty? Why are you wearing your coat and hat?

AUNT EMMY.

I am leaving this place, and I think it is high time. I never thought that I would live to see the day that you would be caught kissing your butler.

MARY.

He isn't my butler.

AUNT EMMY.

I don't care what he is. It's what you are. You, a married woman, forgetting your husband and——

HARVEY.

It is not as bad as it looks. I can explain it in a few words.

AUNT EMMY.

You don't have to explain it to me.

JERRY *enters, left.*

AUNT EMMY.

Here is the person who will require the explanation. (*To* JERRY.) Well, Mr. Marshall, you see the results of your wickedness. While you have been running after other women, a snake has crept into your own home.

JERRY.

(*Not certain just where he stands.*)

What snake do you refer to?

AUNT EMMY.

(*Points to* HARVEY.)

This one. This butler—this criminal has been kissing your wife. Now what are you going to do about it?

JERRY.

(*Making a feeble effort to appear stern.*)

James, is this true?

HARVEY.

More or less.

JERRY.

You shouldn't have done it. I don't like it. You are hired to do general housework, not to kiss my wife.

AUNT EMMY.
(*With contempt.*)
Is that all that you are going to say?

JERRY.
What more *can* I say? I have pointed out that he is exceeding his duties and have told him that I don't like it.

AUNT EMMY.
Aren't you going to *do* anything?

JERRY.
What more is there to do? I have fired him. He comes back. I have sent him to jail, and still he comes back. What can you do with a man like that?

HARVEY.
(*Quietly.*)
Miss Paisley, I think that it is time that we had an understanding. The situation here must be cleared up. I—

STELLA *rushes on from arch, right. She is in disarray and has evidently dressed rather hurriedly.*

STELLA.
(*Wailing.*)
The baby! The baby!

MARY.
(*Quickly.*)
What is it, Stella? What has happened to the baby?

STELLA.
It's gone. It's been stolen.

MARY.

Stolen! That dreadful man! Oh, I knew he would do something. He has stolen my baby.

HARVEY.

(*Going to her.*)

Be calm, Mary. What man are you talking about?

MARY.

An awful man that was here to-night. They sent him up from the employment agency.

HARVEY.

What makes you think that he has stolen Willie?

MARY.

He said that he was fo—fo—fond of children. (*Cries.*)

HARVEY.

Don't break down, Mary. The child may not be stolen. Let us look around the house first, to make sure.

MARY.

Yes, let us look everywhere. Hurry!

(*Exeunt* MARY *and* HARVEY, *right.*)

AUNT EMMY.

(*To* STELLA.)

Where was the baby?

STELLA.

(*Sniffling.*)

He was in my room. But it ain't my fault he's gone. I can't watch him day and night, too. I

gotta get my rest. Anybody that 'rastles with Willie all day is got to get their rest.

JERRY.

I don't believe anyone stole the child. Why should a burglar steal a baby? It isn't reasonable. He couldn't raise a nickel on it.

FLORENCE *appears in arch, right. She is dressed for the street.*

FLORENCE.

Aunty, Mary wants you.

AUNT EMMY.

Where is she? (*Crosses right.*)

FLORENCE.

In the little room at the end of the hall. (*Exit* AUNT EMMY, *right.*) Stella, go into the kitchen and make some coffee. Have it strong and black. Mary is going to need it.

STELLA.

(*Drying her eyes on her sleeve.*)

Yes, ma'am. (*Exit by kitchen door.*)

JERRY.

(*Taking a step toward* FLORENCE.)

Florence—

FLORENCE.

(*Coldly.*)

Why are you here? Why are you not with the others, searching? Do you know that your child has been stolen?

JERRY.

It's not my child. It's the butler's child.

FLORENCE.

I don't want you to speak to me, if you have no more respect for your wife than—

JERRY.

It's not my wife. It's the butler's wife.

FLORENCE.

All I ask of you is to be left alone. In a few minutes, aunty and I are leaving your house forever.

JERRY.

It's not my house. It's the butler's house.

FLORENCE.

(*Impatiently.*)

Is that all that you can say?

JERRY.

It's all there is to say. And I'm going to keep on saying it till you believe me.

(FLORENCE *turns away and sits at right.*)

HARVEY *enters, right. He is very much excited, but he endeavors to appear calm.*

HARVEY.

The child is not to be found. But we must keep cool. I am going to telephone the police. (*He goes over to phone and sits. He takes off the receiver. His hand shakes as he does so, and he has to make several efforts before his words are articulate.*) Give me Chadwick 07. Hello. Is this the police station? This is Harvey P. Marshall speaking.

(FLORENCE *looks at him in a startled way.*) Yes, Harvey P. Marshall, butler and eggs— I mean butter and yeggs. Send an officer to my place at once. A valuable baby has been stolen. All right. (*Jiggles receiver on hook.* FLORENCE *crosses to him.*)

FLORENCE.

Are you Harvey P. Marshall?

HARVEY.

I am.

FLORENCE.

What is your wife's name?

HARVEY.

Mrs. Marshall.

FLORENCE.

Is Mary your wife?

HARVEY.

Yes.

FLORENCE.

Then who is this man? (*Points to* JERRY.)

HARVEY.

(*Looking vaguely at* JERRY.)

I don't know. (*Speaks in mouthpiece.*) Chadwick 2324. This the *Gazette* office? Give me the advertising department. (FLORENCE *returns to seat looking doubtfully at* JERRY.) This the advertising department? Harvey P. Marshall speaking. Take this ad. Ready? "Lost, strayed, or stolen. Eldest son of Harvey P. Marshall. Aged fourteen months. Answers to the name of Willie. Light complexion, slightly bald. Nose like me, mouth like

his mother. A reward of five hundred dollars will be paid to anyone giving information leading to his recovery." Run it next to live reading matter. Got it? All right. (*Hangs up receiver and looks around.*) I'll have to go back to Mary. (*To* JERRY.) Old man, I wish you would go outside and look around. See if you can find footprints or anything of the kind.

JERRY.
(*Rising.*)

Certainly.

HARVEY.

Go out by the window and turn on the veranda light.

JERRY.

All right. (*He goes to window and opens it.*)

FLORENCE.
(*Rises and goes up to window.*)

I'll go, too.

(*Exeunt both by way of window. But they do not turn on light.* HARVEY *rises and crosses to right.*)

MARY *enters, right.*

MARY.
(*Agitatedly.*)

What have you done? Did you telephone the police and the newspapers?

HARVEY.
(*Soothingly.*)

Yes. Everything has been attended to.

MARY.

Did you offer a reward?

HARVEY.

Yes, five hundred dollars.

MARY.

Is that all?

HARVEY.

It is all I have.

MARY.

Oh, Harvey, how can you think of money at a time like this? Offer them five hundred *thousand*—a million—two millions! What do we care for money, when it's for Willie?

HARVEY.

I know, Mary. Of course, we don't care for the money. But it isn't what Willie is worth; it's what I'm worth that we have to figure on. That five hundred is the money I put in the bank in case of sickness.

MARY.

And this is all my fault. If it hadn't been for my foolishness, that man would never have been here at all, and Willie would still be with us!

During above speech, AUNT EMMY *appears in arch at right with the deeds in her hands.*

HARVEY.

(*Leading* MARY *to chair at right.*)

It's no one's fault, my dear.

(MARY *sits.* AUNT EMMY *goes to center.*)

AUNT EMMY.

What did Mary mean by saying that it was her fault the child was stolen?

HARVEY.

(*Turning to* AUNT EMMY.)

Aunt Emmy, I—

AUNT EMMY.

Young man, I am not accustomed to having butlers address me as "Aunt Emmy."

HARVEY.

I am not a butler. I am Harvey P. Marshall, and Mary is my wife.

AUNT EMMY.

Huh! So you decided to tell the truth at last. Well, it's about time.

(HARVEY *and* MARY *both look at* AUNT EMMY *in surprise.*)

HARVEY.

You mean that you knew?

AUNT EMMY.

Of course I knew. How could I help but know? Have you forgotten the photograph of Harvey, which you sent me when you were first married? As for this other man, the doctor, Florence has the house all cluttered up with his pictures—everything from a snapshot to a crayon enlargement.

MARY.

Why didn't you say so before?

AUNT EMMY.

Why should I? I was having the time of my life.

Watching the doctor fall into traps that I laid for him and flounder around trying to get out was as good as a circus.

MARY.

I tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen to me.

AUNT EMMY.

I knew it was one of your silly plots, and I wanted to see if Harvey would go to jail before he would give you away.

MARY.

But it was only a few minutes ago that you said you were going to leave.

AUNT EMMY.

I wasn't going far. Florence and I were going over to the jail to bail Harvey out. (HARVEY *sits at right of table.*)

MARY.

I think it was mean of you, Aunt Emmy, not to say anything when you knew everything.

AUNT EMMY.

I didn't know everything. I don't know yet why you tried to deceive me by making all this foolish show.

MARY.

It wasn't you—not in the first place, I mean. It was Lilly Goodrich. She wrote me about what a beautiful home she lived in—and everything. And I wasn't going to let her think that I wasn't well off, too.

AUNT EMMY.

Lilly Goodrich wrote you about her beautiful home?

MARY.

Yes.

AUNT EMMY.

Huh! They live in that little hut back of the shingle mill. Seth got mixed up in some speculation three years ago and lost every cent that he ever had. I'm glad you didn't marry him.

MARY.

(*Astonished.*)

And Lilly hasn't any limousines or—anything?

AUNT EMMY.

Limousines! She's lucky if she gets enough to eat.

MARY.

(*Shocked.*)

The little liar! Oh, how can people be so deceitful?

AUNT EMMY.

(*Dryly.*)

Yes; it's terrible, isn't it? Well, I'm glad that is the reason for all this silliness. I thought it might be grandpa's property.

MARY.

It was grandpa's property. I wanted it for Willie. But now I don't care if I never hear of it again. All I want is my baby. (*Rises and walks about nervously.*) Harvey, why don't you do something?

HARVEY.

There is nothing to be done. I have to wait here until the police arrive.

MARY.

(*With emotion.*)

It's all my fault. It's a punishment for all my lies and my scheming. I'll never tell a lie again as long as I live! Never, never, never!

AUNT EMMY.

You have learned your lesson at last?

MARY.

Yes. But it's too late now. Willie is gone—kidnapped, and all of our beautiful wedding presents—stolen!

STELLA *enters from kitchen. She is carrying a tray on which are a cup of coffee, a sugar bowl, a spoon, and a napkin.*

AUNT EMMY.

What is it, Stella?

STELLA.

'S a cup of coffee for Miz' Marshall. (*She turns bed linen back from left end of table and places tray on table.*)

MARY.

(*Crossing to left of table.* AUNT EMMY *sits in chair at right.*)

Thank you, Stella. (*Looks at coffee.*) Gracious! It's black.

STELLA.

Yes, Miz' Marshall. *And* strong. The lady said,

"Make her black and strong," and I made her black and strong.

(STELLA *turns as if about to exit.* MARY *sits drinking coffee.*)

HARVEY.

Just a moment, Stella. (STELLA *comes back and stands above left end of table.*) What time was it when you last saw Willie?

STELLA.

When I went to bed. About half past ten.

HARVEY.

Was he asleep?

STELLA.

Yeh. He was sleepin' quiet, like nothin' was goin' to happen to him; just layin' there calm and peaceful with his toe in his mouth.

MARY.

(*Tearfully.*)

Willie loved to sleep with his toe in his mouth.

AUNT EMMY.

It's evident that the man must have taken him while the child was still asleep.

STELLA.

Yes, ma'am. He must 'a' been asleep, 'cause there ain't no burglar livin' that could 'a' took Willie single-handed, if he was awake. Besides Willie would 'a' let a hoot out of him that could be heard over in Staten Island. I know he must 'a' took him when he was asleep 'cause not only does he take Willie, but he takes the basket, too.

MARY.

What basket?

STELLA.

The basket that Willie was in.

MARY.

Do you mean to say that Willie was not in his crib?

STELLA.

No, Miz' Marshall, he wasn't. I put him in the basket so's I could straighten out his crib, and every time I tried to take him out, he bellered. So at last I says, "Well, stay there, you darn' little—" I mean, "you dear little angel," and I went to bed.

MARY.

What basket are you talking about?

STELLA.

It was that clothes basket belongin' to Miz' Allen.

HARVEY.

(*Half rising from his chair.*)

Was the basket in that little room at the end of the hall?

STELLA.

Sure.

HARVEY.

Well, I'll—! (*Sinks back into chair with a groan.*)

MARY.

(*In alarm.*)

What is it?

HARVEY.

I took that basket.

AUNT EMMY *and* MARY.
(*Together.*)

You did!

HARVEY.

Yes.

STELLA.

Say, listen, James. How's come you're foolin' around my room in the middle of the night?

HARVEY.
(*Rising.*)

Wait! (*Goes up to window.*) I'll be back in a minute. (*Doorbell rings.* HARVEY *turns.*) It's the police. Go to the door, Stella. (STELLA *gives* HARVEY *a suspicious look and goes off, left.*) My dear, I don't want to raise any false hopes, but I think that I know where Willie is.

MARY.
(*Rising.*)

Do you mean that you think that he hasn't been stolen?

HARVEY.

Yes.

Enter SYLVIA, *left, followed by* STELLA. SYLVIA *is carrying the clothes basket.*

SYLVIA.

Look what I found, Mary.

MARY.
(*With growing excitement.*)
Sylvia! What is it?

SYLVIA.
(*Putting basket on table.*)
Don't say anything. Just look.

MARY.
(*Looking into basket.*)
It's Willie! Harvey, it's Willie!

HARVEY.
I know.

AUNT EMMY.
(*Looking into basket.*)
He's still asleep. Oh, the precious darling! He looks exactly like Grandpa Paisley.

(*The women all crowd about basket, cooing and talking baby-talk.*)

HARVEY.
Please don't waken him. We've had trouble enough for one night.

STELLA.
I'll say so.

MARY.
Sylvia, where in the world did you find him?

SYLVIA.
I didn't find him. He was handed to me.

MARY.
I don't understand.

SYLVIA.

Well—you see— (*Looks at* AUNT EMMY.)

MARY.

Oh, it's all right. Aunty knows everything—that is—'most everything.

SYLVIA.

The baby was in the basket when Mr. Marshall gave it to me.

AUNT EMMY.

Harvey, do you mean to tell me that you gave your own baby away in a basket? Couldn't you tell by the weight that the basket wasn't empty?

HARVEY.

I thought that it was Mrs. Allen's bed linen.

AUNT EMMY.

But why should you think that?

MARY.

Aunty, I am going to tell you the whole truth about everything. I've made up my mind never to do a deceitful thing as long as I live.

HARVEY.

Stella, you had better put the baby in his crib. (STELLA *picks up basket and goes, right.*) And please try not to lose him again.

STELLA.

Say, listen, James, or Harvey, or whatever your name is, how's come you got so bossy, all of a sudden? You ain't got no privileges to tell me where to get off at, even if you have got a stand-in with the family.

HARVEY.

Stella hasn't got the idea yet.

MARY.

She is going to be very disappointed when she finds out. She has made plans for the long winter evenings.

AUNT EMMY.

What were you about to say, Mary?'

MARY.

I was going to tell you that the curtains and some of the silver belong to Sylvia.

AUNT EMMY.

Some of the silver? Doesn't all of the silver belong to her?

MARY.

(*With dignity.*)

Certainly not. The baby's silver mug belongs to us.

SYLVIA.

I'll have to run home, Mary. I am expecting Tom to get back any minute.

HARVEY.

Go the short way, Mrs. Allen. I'll turn on the veranda light.

SYLVIA.

Thank you. Good night, everybody.

(HARVEY, *at window, turns light switch, then swings window wide open. A tableau is revealed. In the bright light of the veranda,* JERRY *and* FLORENCE *are standing in a close embrace. He is kissing*

her, and they are both entirely unconscious of being observed. The three women stand at gaze, unable to utter a word. HARVEY *does not see the picture, as he is facing into the room, holding the window open and waiting for* SYLVIA *to go out.*)

MARY.
(*In a low voice.*)
Quick, Harvey, shut the window!

(HARVEY *throws the window shut, without seeing the couple on the veranda. He comes down right.*)

HARVEY.
What's the matter?

SYLVIA.
I've decided to go around the front way. (*Starts left, about to exit. Turns.*) Oh, I nearly forgot. I may as well take along my silver.

HARVEY.
Your silver? Why, you have your silver already.

SYLVIA.
No, I haven't. Don't you remember, Mr. Marshall, you were to bring the bag over.

HARVEY.
I put it out on the veranda. I thought that you got it. Somebody did. Dr. Niles couldn't find it when he looked a moment after I put it there.

MARY.
Oh, Harvey, you've lost Sylvia's wedding presents. Are we never going to be out of trouble?

(*Doorbell rings, off left.*)

HARVEY.

It must be the police. It's lucky I sent for them. (*Crosses to left and goes out by front door.*)

HARVEY *returns immediately, followed by* SHEA, *who is carrying the traveling bag used in the previous act.*

SHEA.

Good avenin', ladies. This is your property, I belave, Mr. Marshall. All you will have to do is idintify it. (*Puts bag on table and opens it.*)

MARY.

(*Looking into bag.*)

Yes. Those are my wedding presents— I mean Mrs. Allen's wedding presents. Where did you get them?

SHEA.

About eliven-fifteen, the patrolman on the beat spies a suspicious character leggin' it out of your yard with this valise in his hand. He arrests him and takes him to the station.

HARVEY.

Who was it?

SHEA.

'Twas our ould fri'nd Limpy Lannigan; no other. One of the detectives ricognizes him. He says 'twas the same lad that was sint here from the employment agency. He's a clever crook, but he tells the most foolish story I iver heard. Says he didn't stale the stuff. Says the man that owned it handed him the

bag through the windy. Can you imagine anny man bein' fool enough to do a thrick like that?

HARVEY.

No, I can't imagine it. My wife has all the imagination in this family.

SHEA.

An' what's this I do be hearin' about a baby bein' lost?

HARVEY.

It's a mistake, officer. He wasn't lost; he was only—er—mislaid.

SHEA.

Then there is nothin' else I could be doin' for you, Mr. Marshall?

HARVEY.

Nothing, unless you will see that Mrs. Allen gets safely home with this silver.

SHEA.

(*Closing bag and picking it up.*)

'Twill be a pleasure.

SYLVIA.

Thank you, officer. (*Goes to door.*) Good night, everyone.

ALL.

Good night.

HARVEY.

(*Stopping officer, as he is about to exit.*)

Here is something for you. And something for the patrolman. (*Hands him a couple of bills.*)

SHEA.

You're a gintleman, Mr. Marshall.

HARVEY.

I'd offer you a cigar, but I appear to be all out of cigars.

SHEA.

'Tis just as well. I don't smoke, annyway. (*Exit, left.*)

HARVEY.

(*Turning to* MARY.)

Well, everything appears to be coming out right, after all. If we could only think of some way to bring Florence and Dr. Niles together.

AUNT EMMY.

(*Dryly.*)

If you can think of any way of bringing them closer together than they were the last time I saw them, it would be wonderful. Before I forget it, take these deeds. (*Hands them to* HARVEY.)

MARY.

Oh, thank you so much, aunty. (*Kisses her.*) Now, as Harvey says, Willie can get a toe-hold on the business world.

HARVEY.

(*Going to phone.*)

"Foothold," my dear. I shall have to call up the *Gazette* and kill that ad.

MARY.

What are you going to tell them?

HARVEY.

(*Sits at telephone.*)

Tell them the truth, of course.

MARY.

Oh, Harvey, you can't do that. You can't tell them that you handed your own baby out of the window in a basket. They would never get tired laughing about it.

HARVEY.

(*Helplessly.*)

Well, what can I tell them?

MARY.

Let me think. (*She crosses to* HARVEY.) Oh, yes. Tell them this: (*She puts her arm around his shoulder and talks rapidly and earnestly. About the middle of the speech,* AUNT EMMY *throws up her hands in a gesture of despair and sinks into a chair, right. The expression on* HARVEY'S *face slowly changes from interest to dismay. About three-quarters of the way through the speech, the curtain slowly descends, leaving* MARY *still talking.*) Tell them that there really was an attempt made to kidnap Willie. Say that an aristocratic old couple, Lord and Lady Canterbury, who lived at Tewkesbury-on-the-Thames in England, had recently lost their only son, little Lord Eric, by drowning. They didn't know what in the world to do, because if there was no heir all the property would go to Sir Gilbert Harcourt, a distant cousin who was a scoundrel. So they called in their faithful old butler and said, "James, you must find us a child that looks exactly like our dear little Eric." So James went all over

the world, searching for a child that looked like his little master. At last he came to America and there one day—

CURTAIN

Back Seat Drivers

BY

LAURENCE (LARRY) E. JOHNSON

COMEDY in 3 acts; 5 men, 4 women. Time, 2½ hours. **Scene:** 1 interior.

CHARACTERS

(As they appear in the play)

John Wilson.....A young business man
Connie Wilson.....His wife
Peter Simms.....A neighbor, also a business man
Goofie.....Handy man about the neighborhood
Della Moffet.....Connie's friend and neighbor
Cuthbert Moffet...Della's husband, a young business man
Austin Spence.....A smooth customer
Amy Webb-Stephens.....Spence's side partner
Clara Simms.....Peter's wife

With a Broadway production and a successful run in stock to its credit, this gay drama of young married life and back seat financiering makes a strong bid for popularity. Two young wives, Connie and Della, whose besetting sin is to twitch hubby's arm at crucial moments when he drives the family bus and the family apple cart, conceive a bright idea of curing their husbands of investing family funds without wifey's approval. Conspiring with a chance salesman of electric toasters, they form a fake corporation to promote the manufacture and sale of an electrical egg-boiling device and persuade their husbands to invest money in it. And then the fun begins. Enter a lovely young widow, alleged owner of the egg boiler, who keeps the wives on pins and needles by flirting outrageously with their husbands. But the husbands are not as dumb as they look, and by some skillful gum-shoeing, catch the lovely widow in the act of sneaking out of town with a nice little slice of the corporation funds, while tipping off the police to a similar move on the part of her fellow crook, the salesman. Other characters who add to the general hilarity are the cocksure, smart-Aleck business man who insists on buying stock in the fake corporation, also his jealous, henpecking wife. An ideal play for any dramatic club looking for smart lines, swift action, sure-fire rôles, and a hurricane of laughs.

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T. S. Denison & Company, Publishers
623 South Wabash Avenue CHICAGO

Pat Piper's Place

BY

EDWIN SCRIBNER

COMEDY-DRAMA in 3 acts; 5 men, 3 women. **Time,** 2½ hours. **Scene:** 1 interior.

CHARACTERS

(As they appear in the play)

Asa Buncle....Handy man about the Piper tourist camp
Mrs. Mehitable Poag.....Cook at the tourist camp
Myron T. Landers.....The deaf tourist
William Burtis.....A federal prohibition agent
Patricia Piper (Pat).....Owner of the tourist camp
Jim Hammond.....A neighbor, in love with Pat
Nellie Davis.....Bob's fiancée
Bob Piper.....Pat's brother

Pat Piper, who runs a respectable roadhouse on the Canadian border, has a man's sized problem on her hands; how to keep her reckless kid brother Bob from engaging in rumrunning across the border. Pat blames their neighbor Jim, who is reputed to be a successful rum-runner and who is in love with her, for setting Bob a bad example. But when a federal agent invades the tourist camp in search of illicit hootch, with Bob's two incriminating suit cases in imminent danger of being discovered, she is glad enough to accept Jim's aid in saving the foolish cub from the penalty of the law. When Jim in turn faces arrest, from having taken the guilt on his own shoulders, she does not hesitate to rush to his rescue and lock the spluttering federal agent in a closet overnight, while the evidence is prudently being destroyed. Just how Jim works out of his precarious position, turns the tables on the grafting agent, and regains Pat's respect form a chapter of thrills and high-powered comedy which makes the play almost play itself. Cast includes: a comical cook who loves to groan; Pat's grinning boy of all work, a capital Toby character; and a deaf tourist, who turns out to be something quite different.

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623 South Wabash Avenue CHICAGO

The Ghost Bird

BY

NEIL E. SCHAFFNER

MYSTERY COMEDY in 4 acts; 6 men, 6 women. Time, 2¼ hours. **Scene:** 1 interior.

CHARACTERS
(As they appear in the play)

Andalusia Anderson.....Mrs. Dore's hired girl
Will Belmont.....Catherine's young brother
Tobias Tolliver (Toby).....An amateur detective
Mrs. Dore.....Owner and mistress of the house
Carl Thomas.....A young lawyer
Catherine Belmont.....A girl with an unwelcome suitor
Philip Graham.....Who has rented the house
Brad Buckhart..His friend, chief of the detective squad
Celeste.....Catherine's maid
Bella Walker }
Annie Bloom }
.....Young girls of the neighborhood
Jenkins.....A police detective

Here we have the most dramatic situation a detective play can offer: A life-and-death contest of wits between a super-crook and a master mind on the police detective force. The super-crook, known by the sinister title of the Vulture, is the first to score in the contest: his arch-enemy is mysteriously murdered. The crime is committed in an isolated farmhouse, where the murdered man has been invited by a would-be friend as chief of a party of guests. Naturally everyone in the house falls under suspicion, especially as practically all have good reason to hate the murdered man. Although the unraveling of the murder mystery is presumably in the hands of a police detective, he receives copious suggestions from a comical hick correspondence-school detective, who specializes in fingerprints and is just brimming over with bright ideas. Though these suggestions are received with scorn, some of them prove to be valuable; and in the end it is the amateur "fingerprinter" who digs up the clew that leads to the capture of the murderer, and who prevents his escape. An unusual detective mystery play, in which thrills and goose flesh are mingled with laughter created by the funny sleuth. The cast includes a gabby hired girl; the brutal, bullying victim of the Vulture; a charming ingénue; a pretended French maid; a typical hard-boiled police detective; and the treacherous, black-robed Vulture himself.

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The Mender

BY

EDWARD E. ROSE

COMEDY-DRAMA in 4 acts; 3 men, 3 women. Time, 2½ hours. **Scene:** 1 interior.

CHARACTERS

(As they appear in the play)

Mary Bradley.....Luther Bradley's niece
Richard Arling.....Mary's young man
Luther Bradley.....Hintonville's richest man
Liberty Ann Brown (Libby)....An independent spinster
Lucy Bradley.....Luther's invalid daughter
Sam Giddings.....The Mender

How a poor little invalid emerges from her state of invalidism and those about her renovate their discontented and unhappy disposition through the power of optimistic faith is the theme of this inspiring drama of regeneration. Back to the sleepy little town of his early days comes Sam, the Mender, who mends everything from broken pans to sick souls and ailing bodies. He finds half the town in debt to the much-detested village Shylock, Luther Bradley, and deeply discouraged, particularly Luther's own niece, who drudges for him, and her young man, whose place is mortgaged to him. Luther himself, mean as he is, is worried to death by the condition of his young invalid daughter, whose malady is steadily growing worse. Upon all around him, Sam turns the sunshine of his cheery philosophy, concentrating especially on Lucy, whose physical state improves under his ministrations. His final triumph comes when the operation that is depended upon to save Lucy's life is unavoidably delayed and she is cured by a higher power. The Mender himself, far from being a preaching moralist, is a lovable, waggish sort of fellow. His courtship of a prickly spinster, which turns into one long, sweet lovers' squabble, is one of the humorous high lights of the play. A strong, wholesome play, with enough tears and laughter to satisfy the most exacting. A metropolitan success, with a long run in professional stock to its credit.

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Glorious Annabelle

BY

FLORENCE EDNA MAY

FARCE in 3 acts; 6 men, 4 women. Time, 2¼ hours. **Scene:** 1 interior.

CHARACTERS

(As they appear in the play)

Mortimer Keyes.....An eccentric millionaire
Mrs. Ellsworth.....His housekeeper
Rosamond Green.....His secretary
Richard Keyes.....His nephew
Amy Keyes.....His adopted daughter
Jack Jarvis.....Richard's chum
Messenger.....From Western Union
Judge Latham.....Mortimer's friend and attorney
Don Manuel.....An emotional artist of the bull ring
Annabelle Lee.....A vaudeville dancer

Advice to stern parent: If daughter insists on getting engaged to the wrong man, disinherit the young folks and beat them to it. It seems a masterly move to Mortimer Keyes, eccentric millionaire, but it gets him into hot water up to his ears. Failing to make a match between his adopted daughter and his giddy nephew, both of whom have given their hearts elsewhere, he selects the name of Annabelle Lee at random from the telephone directory and announces his engagement to her. The nephew countermoves by persuading his chum Jack, a clever young actor in love with daughter, to impersonate the unknown Annabelle, who turns out to be a vaudeville dancer. Then come the fireworks! Mortimer, who has never intended to carry out his treat to marry, almost dies of consternation when confronted by Jack masquerading as the seductive Widow Lee. In the end, he falls hard for the widow, who also wins the approval of daughter and of Mortimer's pretty secretary, though she arouses nothing but jealousy in Mortimer's lovelorn housekeeper. Finally the real Annabelle arrives on the scene in time to save the entire Keyes household from being stampeded by a jealous admirer of the fair dancer. The climax of this hilarious scene brings a big surprise. The play is a tornado of mirth, which has rocked numerous audiences with laughter in the course of its long and successful career in professional stock. Specially recommended to smart dramatic clubs in search of fast-moving, up-to-the minute farce. Contains one of the greatest female impersonation rôles ever written.

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The Girl From Out Yonder

BY

MARION SHORT AND PAULINE PHELPS

COMEDY-DRAMA in 4 acts; 6 men, 4 women. Time, 2¼ hours. **Scenes:** 1 interior, 2 exteriors.

CHARACTERS

(As they appear in the play)

Mrs. Elmer.....A New York society matron
Clarice Stapleton.....A debutante
Edward Elmer.....Mrs. Elmer's nephew
J. Hubert Hughes.....Elmer's friend
Flotsam.....The girl from out yonder
Joey Clarke.....A young fisherman
Captain Amos Barton.....Flotsam's father
Ben Cooke.....The Captain's crony
Cousin Simonson.....The Captain's housekeeper
Stevens.....A waiter at Terry's Harbor Inn

(NOTE.—The rôle of the sheriff, which is not a speaking part, may be assumed by a stage hand, if no suitable super is available.)

Flotsam, the charming young daughter of the lighthouse keeper, finds herself the object of attention of a party of fashionable New York visitors at the harbor clubhouse. She is particularly singled out by Elmer, the kind young man of the party, with whom she promptly falls in love. Their love affair prospers in spite of the malicious maneuverings of the society girl, who is angling for Elmer herself, and the jealous plottings of the fisher lad who is violently in love with Flotsam. At last the fisher lad, in an upflaring of passion, wrecks the course of true love by revealing the fact that Flotsam's father, the old fishing captain, was the murderer of Elmer's father twenty years previously. The poor old captain, heart-broken with the burden of secret guilt long carried, gives himself up to justice and serves his term, supported by the tender affection and devotion of his daughter, who seems to be permanently alienated from her lover. But in the end, love and loyalty win the day, and a surprising revelation brings the lovers together again. A gripping play, overflowing with heart interest and pathos, tempered with laughter, which has kept many audiences laughing and crying during its long and prosperous run in professional stock. Cast includes two excellent all-comedy characters: an obdurate widow, hard to win; and her persistent fisherman swain.

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What Anne Brought Home

BY

LARRY E. JOHNSON

COMEDY in 3 acts; 5 men, 4 women. Time, 2½ hours. **Scene:** 1 interior.

CHARACTERS
(As they appear in the play)

Sam Bennet.....A small-town lumber merchant
Mrs. Hattie Bennet.....His wife
Alma Bennet.....His youngest daughter
Herb Hardcastle.....Alma's young man, with ambitions
Henry Bennet.....Sam's brother
Anne Bennet Purdy.....Sam's second daughter
Dudley Purdy.....What Anne brought home
Nina Bennet.....Sam's eldest daughter
J. T. Raymond.....
.....General manager of an electric power company

Fresh from a prosperous run on Broadway and a remarkably successful career in professional stock, this capital comedy of small-town life well deserves its popularity with the theater-going public. What Anne brings home from Valpo, to the consternation of her family, is a brand new husband, with whom she settles down in an already overcrowded household. Henceforward, Dudley, the young husband, has to sleep with the cranky Uncle Henry and endure the gibes of his in-laws, who make no secret of their contempt for him and sneer at his pet project of establishing a fish farm. The truth is that as a go-getter Dudley is a total loss. Nevertheless he persists in the fish farm enterprise, in the interest of which he secures an option on some property of his father-in-law, thereby temporarily blocking the sale of the land to a power-company magnate and incurring the wrath of not only the in-laws but Anne herself. How he finally manages to put over a big deal with the magnate, straighten out two tangled love affairs, placate the in-laws, and square himself with Anne are details of as vividly human and humorous a story as ever delighted an audience. Cast has a rich variety of comedy types including Anne's matter-of-fact mother; her dryly humorous father; Herb, the swaggering go-getter; and the irascible Uncle Henry, whose particular bug is "cranberry" culture.

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MYSTERY THRILLERS

The Ghost Bird

Mystery comedy in 4 acts, by NEIL E. SCHAFFNER; 6 m., 6 w. Time, 2¼ hrs. *Scene:* **1 interior. A highly dramatic tale of the unraveling of a murder mystery, in which the wits of a super-crook are pitted against the master mind of a crack detective. Thrills in plenty. Production fee, ten dollars. Price, 50 Cents**

The Red Thread of Guilt

Mystery drama in 4 acts, by ERNEST J. SHARPSTEEN; 6 m., 3 w. Time, 2 hrs. *Scenes:* **2 interiors. An insignificant red laundry thread provides a clue to a tangled murder mystery and leads to a chain of exciting events, during which suspicion falls upon every character. Ends in an unexpected solution. Production fee, ten dollars. Price, 50 Cents**

The House of a Thousand Thrills

Mystery drama in prologue and 3 acts, by LESLIE CHADWICK BROWNING; 5 m., 6 w. Time, 2½ hrs. *Scenes:* **2 interiors. Mysterious rappings, strange lights, stealthy footsteps fill the Carlton house with terror. A girl sleuth and a writer of detective stories, though balked by schemers in the household, expose the mystery. Production fee, ten dollars. Price, 50 Cents**

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—have been carefully selected for their high degree of dramatic strength and their practicable acting qualities. The majority of them have been specially written for amateurs by experienced playwrights with professional successes to their credit. The plays have been edited with unusual care, particularly as to stage directions, which are so complete, clearly expressed, and easily understood that they almost direct themselves. Above all, the Denison royalty plays have the swift movement, the humor, and the emotional qualities that appeal strongly to young players and grip the attention of audiences throughout an evening's entertainment.

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